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The Girl with Two Selves

F. H. Costello

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THE GIRL WITH TWO SELVES

THE GIRL WITH TWO SELVES

BY
F. H. COSTELLO
AUTHOR OF MASTER ARDICK: BUCCANEER,
AND
THE TWO ON GALLEY ISLAND

L.C.

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THE GIRL WITH TWO SELVES

CHAPTER I

HAMIL LEARNS THAT HE IS MARRIED

HAMIL observed Nature rather than studied her. Just now he could satisfy himself with all that the river and the starred sky had to offer, and still give the most of his time to the tantalizing suggestion of human mystery that had only recently been presented to him. He was calm and unhurried about it; for, in the first place, there was nothing that he could see requiring haste; and then the hour and the surroundings stood for a grave and leisurely deliberation that it would have seemed almost indecorous to refuse. He was a young and vigorous American; but books and sentiment had created a deep background for him, so that he felt himself continuous with this an-

cient past, even though he saw it in little, as one sees through the big end of a spyglass.

The steamer was going down the Nile with the stars bringing out vaguely one bank or the other, making barely visible the specters of trees and the exaggerated sweep of shining water, and intensifying the feeling that there was no human life anywhere about but his own—the rest slept with the mummies of the tombs, or under the rubbish-heaps of the vanished cities.

To be sure, there was wild life enough, but this, instead of filling the void, emphasized it. Man seemed to have dropped out of the scheme of creation, leaving this flat, silent world once again to the primitive creatures. The invisible marsh spots gave out bird-cries and weird sounds; unknown things of weight flopped or splashed from mud banks; and often a little black island, that meant the back of a hippopotamus, broke clear from the water, slipped along, for a minute or two in the swift current, and then leisurely vanished. Or a crocodile, like a floating tree, would

come into the feeble near-light, and finally drop back to the deeps, leaving a fleeting bit of pale radiance upon the disturbed surface. Hamil felt all this rather than saw it, and in the cutting off of the world outside he had the keener thought for the interesting corner of the little world at hand.

The party that excited his curiosity had come aboard just at dark, and from then till now had kept away from the other passengers. Not that there was anything strange in this inclination considered by itself, for of course many rather ordinary reasons might account for their aloofness; the odd part, which was puzzling and interesting Hamil, was that the elderly man who led the party seemed to be devoting all his time and a marked solicitude to a particular girl.

She did not appear to be more than twenty. She was oddly beautiful, with yellow-brown hair and a fair skin, though eyebrows and lashes were both distinctly black. The eyes themselves were gray. She was rather tall, somewhat slight, and in the few movements

that Hamil saw, was noticeably graceful. Her dress was nothing out of the ordinary for travelers, and might easily indicate wealth, as it certainly did good taste.

Briefly, in these mere general and outward matters, there was nothing that accounted for the man's pains in keeping her so carefully by herself. For her part, she seemed a bit grave, and before the swift nightfall Hamil, getting a good long-range view of her face, had noticed that once or twice she puckered her odd, dark brows, and seemed vexed. On one of these occasions the man had bent over her and said something, at which she had smiled. Yet it struck Hamil that she did this less from satisfaction at what had been said than a desire to please. By this time the watcher had guessed that they were father and daughter.

The man was around sixty, rather short, solid in body, with reddish-gray hair and a snow-white mustache. His features were regular, his air was brisk and energetic, and there was about him a general suggestion of

a go-ahead, practical business man. It was another fairly safe guess that he was an American. He possessed a well-dressed appearance and showed no sign of soon passing into the easy period of the "slippered pantaloon."

There were others in the party, and all were included in Hamil's little study. One was a squat, dark, plainly dressed man who always kept near the older gentleman, and was soon placed as his valet. Next to him sat a tall, angular, elderly woman of strong frame and large features, who was dressed comfortably and neatly, but without much regard to fashion. Evidently she was a sort of superior servant; but she appeared to take more than a mere perfunctory interest in what was mainly her business, which was to assist the father in his oversight of the peculiar young lady.

The last person in the group looked strikingly like the elderly man. She was a girl of sixteen, to eighteen, rather short, but plump, decidedly pretty, and had a good deal of color. Her mass of hair was dark auburn,

and her wide-awake eyes were blue. Her father (that the old man was her father might be taken as a matter of course) called her "Bess," while she oftener than otherwise addressed him as "Major."

Also in the common-place matter of names there was something peculiar and uncommon when it came to the "mystery girl"—so Hamil had mentally catalogued her. Sometimes the man, and sometimes the young girl, called her "Carmen"; but one might gather that this was a slip of the tongue, for the speaker would immediately correct the word, and substitute "Edith." At such times she appeared slightly vexed; but as they seemed sorry, she manifestly became pacified.

Hamil now thought that he had solved the little mystery. The girl who was the heart of it was not wholly sane, though probably her trouble did not extend beyond some form of mild hallucination. Yet there was that in her manner which to a degree upset this theory. She had none of the restlessness, and the discursiveness in her talk that Hamil had

always observed in such unbalanced people as had come under his notice. On the contrary, she was quiet, not fidgeting, nor fussing, and what he had thus far heard her say was not only rational but relevant; she seemed to keep the trend of the talk, and did not herself break suddenly and jerkily away from it.

On the whole, though, his theory appeared to be sustained; but there remained a sufficient doubt to keep the whole thing tantalizingly interesting.

By this time he was tired of his chair, and decided to take a few turns around the deck. Hands in coat pockets, he started. In one of the turns, as he drew rather near the party, the younger girl moved her chair and started to rise.

"Oh, Car—Edith!" she suddenly exclaimed, still with the queer confusion of name. "Did I hit your arm? I made you drop something, did n't I?"

There was already a little cry of dismay.

"Yes, yes! It was one of my rings; I had it in my hand. It was one that my husband

gave me—the rose diamond." Her distress was poignant. "Oh, I must n't lose it! Get a lantern, somebody."

The old gentleman had already lighted a match.

"Look with this, Bess, till I can get a lantern."

But where he stood Hamil got a slant of light from one of the ship's suspended lanterns. It brought out, under Bessie's abandoned chair, a tiny sparkle. He advanced and picked up the ring.

The owner by this time was stooping and peering about. She saw his movement, however, and looked toward him.

"Here it is," he said with a smile.

The girl cried out joyfully, and put out her hand for it. At that moment the old gentleman returned with a lantern.

Hamil was about to withdraw, but the girl halted him by sweetly thanking him, and he stopped to return the usual polite phrases. He had lifted his cap, and the lantern light now struck fairly upon his face.

As the girl got this first distinct look at him, an expression of surprise overspread her countenance as if she were reminded of something, or somebody familiar. Then a dash of excited color came into her cheeks, and the hand holding the ring dropped to her side. She stared wild-eyed and strangely into his face.

The young man, himself taken by surprise, for the instant stared back. Suddenly Bess pushed by him.

"What is it, sister?" There was a note of alarm in her voice. "Why do you look at this gentleman so? Oh, Papa! Here—quick; I don't know—"

But a long, slender white hand, warm and virile, forced its way past the agitated younger girl, and closed with nervous eagerness on Hamil's wrist.

"Jack! Oh, Jack, I can't be wrong!—It is really you at last! Don't you know me?—Don't you know Edith? They have told me all kinds of things about you—why you stayed away—but I always knew it was n't your fault.

Papa, hold the light near!—nearer still, I tell you!"

"Oh Carmen, please don't—don't!" Bess clutched her arm, shaking like a leaf and sobbing.

"Hush!" the father cautioned, but he was evidently very greatly disturbed himself. "Don't excite her. I—I—perhaps it won't last. We must n't attract attention. Yes, dear daughter, here is the light. Now you can look at the gentleman. You will see that you are mistaken."

Hamil said afterwards that it was the strangest and most upset moment of his life. In fact, that he was like a "great, helpless dummy." Hardly knowing what else to do, he squared a little more to the light, and the gray eyes went on searching his face.

Suddenly they grew tenderly luminous. The delicate, sensitive lips trembled. She leaned a trifle forward and took his other hand.

"Jack—my husband—it *is* you!" she declared deliberately, her voice vibrant with

an undercurrent of happiness. "They can't fool me! They need n't try any longer. And you need n't make believe, either. I can see that you are full of the tremendous joke. You meant to give me the surprise of my life, and you have! God bless you! I knew you would come back to Edith. The years could n't break the hope, or break my heart!"

She slipped past Bess, and close up to him. Her two hands reached up and clasped his face. Before he could understand—could in any way get out of the bewilderment—she had drawn his face gently down—how could he resist?—and her lips were closed on his.

Then, swiftly changing and pressing her cheek to his, she whispered:

"Darling, I don't care if people do look! Take me in your arms—hold me close—make me know that your are here!"

But the strong hands of the tall old woman were now on one of the girl's arms, and the father gently grasped the other.

"Carmen," he said, "you must stop and

listen to me. This is not your husband. You—"

But with one swift, deft motion, she shook them both off.

"No! no! I am not Carmen. This *is* my husband! Jack, will you deny me? Will you let them separate us? By the God that made me, if you do I will take my life! There will be nothing left to live for! Jack, break this spell! What does it mean? Why do you cower?—Well, then say it—if you must —say that you don't love me."

She raised her head, and looked him in the face.

Rarely was a sane man ever so near utter bewilderment. His name—his true name—spoken with such love, such an appeal, such hope at first, and growing despair now—and spoken by such lips, and with such a face near his—There are no words that will measure up to what he felt.

Then came upon him a strange, irresistible compassion; a tenderness, indeed, that was unlike anything he had ever felt before.

He might be doing wrong,—acting like an impulsive fool,—but it was beyond him to resist. He bent his head a little, and gently whispered:

"I shall never say that I don't love you. I —you may—you must believe in me. I won't desert you. If they will let me I will stay with you. I—but God help me! what am I saying?"

But she did not seem to catch the last. With a little whispering cry, she had his face again to hers.

But dark as this part of the deck was—except for the lantern—the bit of stir had caught the notice of some of the other passengers, and Hamil was aware of a suspicious moving of chairs. He came to himself; that is, he got back his practical sense. He heard now the low sobbing of Bessie and the deep breathing of the father. It seemed that they too were helpless for the moment and bewildered.

"Edith," he whispered, "people are noticing us. They think something is wrong. Sit

down here again by your sister and this other lady, and appear as if nothing unusual had happened. I will sit down by you."

She clapped him on the cheeks again, and with a long breath drew back.

"All right, dear. Now that I have you again I am willing to do anything."

She went back to her chair, but smilingly led him along with her.

"There is another chair," she said, pointing to one. "Take that."

"I will. But first, dear, I want to say something to your father. It is important, and if I don't look out I shall forget it. You will excuse me just a moment, won't you?"

"Yes," she said after a doubting instant. "But don't be long, and don't let papa say things to you that—well, I don't know just what. My head has n't been quite right all of the time; but I know that he has said some things to fool me and put me off. I am myself again now, and he must n't do it any more. You can see for yourself that I am perfectly rational. I am not talking loudly, am I? I

am so steady and composed that those people think there was n't anything up, after all, and they have gone back. Well, dear, go with the Major now, and don't be long."

"I won't. Be patient and a good little girl."

He turned to the deep-breathing, shaken old man.

"Now, if you will give me a few moments. I have told Edith that it was a piece of rather important business, and she has kindly excused me."

"There," she called out triumphantly, before her father could answer, "you see, he knows all about it! He calls me Edith. He does n't mix me up with your 'Carmens.' Go on, Jack, and if you need a little extra time take it. Nobody can deceive you."

"Thank you for the good opinion, dear. . . . Now, Major."

The old man, still shaken but forcing himself to play his part, managed to affect a businesslike air, and gestured in the direction of the bows.

"Good place there, I guess. Nobody very near, and we can speak low."

"All right."

They moved off together, Hamil trying to keep his nerves out of his gait.

CHAPTER II

A BUSINESS ARRANGEMENT

WELL up forward, in the little triangle of the bows, they stopped. Nobody was very near.

The old man nervously worked his hat about on his head, but suddenly stopped and jammed both hands into his trousers pockets.

"This is the confoundest piece of business I ever struck! I don't know what you are going to say to me, and I don't know just what to say to you. I am pretty nearly off my base. You can see somewhere near what the situation is."

Hamil, though his training had not been a business one, could be businesslike. He saw no use in beating about the bush.

"Your daughter is somewhat out of her mind," he said, "and fancies that I am her husband. That is a pretty awkward whim to

deal with, and I don't wonder that it sort of breaks you up. But now, if there is anything that I can do call on me; I am at your service."

"Thank you. Yes, you are right, or pretty near it. The girl is mentally unbalanced. She is—it would take a good while to explain it. One doctor thinks it is in part a mental disturbance, and in part a dual personality. That may be rot; I am sure I don't know. But this is a new freak of hers. She is n't married, so that 's all delusion, but this is the first time she has imagined she has found the person. What to do now, and how to get her out of the idea, is more than I can tell. She is set when once she makes up her mind, and she has any amount of grit. You heard what she said about killing herself? How I wish I knew what to do!"

Hamil glanced away for a moment, and then back. His face was of that strong, controlled type that is hard to read. Nevertheless, there was sympathy plain in it now, even by the poor light.

"There is one thing," he went on in answer, "that I should say must be done. For the present you will have to give in to her, and let her have her way. Though of course I don't know much about her, yet I am of the opinion that anything different would be extremely risky."

The old man rocked a little on his toes, and puffed out a debating breath.

"Yes, I suppose that 's true, and I don't want to take the risk you speak of; but—well, how is it to be done? You would have to go along with us, and I can't go so far as to ask that. The old Nick can't tell how long you would have to stay! And yet, on the other hand, it seems almost like a business of life and death. I am willing to pay any reasonable amount of money, if that will do any good. Can we fix up anything, either for humanity's sake or for cash, or both? I am rich and have only these two children: life would n't be worth living if anything happened to either of them."

His voice trembled a little, but he steadied

himself and looked up into Hamil's face. Hamil, dark, almost inscrutable such times as he was in deep thought, his frame towering up big and massive, stood imposingly over the older man. But this was only for an instant. Hamil dropped an assuring hand upon his shoulder.

"As far as this matter is concerned consider it all right," with a confident air. "I will go with you, and you can keep me till you are through with me. I know you will feel better if we clinch it on a money basis, and you may pay me whatever you please. Call me your private secretary, if you want to. That is, if you have n't one already."

The old man's eyes sparkled. As the heavy hand slipped from his shoulder he seized it and shook it.

"I am thunderingly obliged to you! It helps me out of a bad hole. As for your pay—to settle the money part of it—I never had a secretary, but one like you will be worth to me not less than three hundred dollars a

month. It shan't be a cent less, and if you say more—"

"No! no!" broke in Hamil. "That will be more than I ever earned before, and will be ample. I may as well tell you that I am a sort of floater, and never did much at any particular job. I am something of a musician; I sing, and do a little at fencing, boxing, and monkeying with a few of the modern languages. In all, I have managed to keep my head above water. I have no family ties, so that I have n't needed a great income. I have n't told you my name yet. It is John Dana. I am such a cosmopolite that there is no need for me to give a hailing place."

"All right, Mr. Dana," the old man acquiesced with pleased heartiness. "And my name is McAllister. I live in Newark, New Jersey. Or I call that home, though of late I have n't seen much of it. I have traveled a good deal, mainly on account of Carmen. It has seemed to take up her mind.

"But the first chance I get I must tell you

more about her. I don't suppose it will do to linger a great while now. I will say, though, that this trouble has been on her now about two years. Before that she seemed to be all right. Her name is Carmen,—after my wife, who had some Spanish blood, as well as a Spanish name,—but she insists that it is Edith. She knows that she is my daughter, and remembers most things of her past life; but she fancies that a few years ago she was married, and that enemies have kept her husband from her. At first she was down on us, but after a while I managed to persuade her that we had nothing to do with his disappearance, and in a way that has come around all right. But I had to promise her that if I ever did learn where her husband was I would tell her, and bring him to her. And it looks now," he finished with a troubled laugh, "as if I had pretty nearly kept my word."

Hamil nodded encouragingly.

"It all may turn out for the best. I should suppose she would be more contented now, and easier to control. It is an odd coincidence,"

he went on, "that my name is really Jack—that is, John. But my friends always call me 'Jack.' Her speaking to me in that way, just now, was one of the things that helped to confuse me. But, ah! that makes me think—what is the rest of my supposed name? I mean, what does she think is her husband's name?"

"'Beecham.' That is, she pronounces it so. She spells it as if it was 'Beauchamp.' That is some sort of English twist, I believe. I am not up in that kind of thing."

"Yes, that is the way the name is pronounced in England. It is a blue-blood name there. They have an Earl of Beauchamp, you know. Well, I am Jack Beauchamp, then. So far, so good."

McAllister looked back at the girl. She was sitting quietly, and though her face was turned their way she showed no sign of impatience or discontent.

"I guess we have done a good stroke of business," he said with a satisfied nod. "Well, and that leaves only one thing—it 's all I think

of now: How are you going to account to her for the way you will have to get along with her? She thinks she is your wife, you know."

"Of course I have had that feature of the situation in my mind," Hamil said thoughtfully. "It does look at first hard to get around, but I believe I have thought of a way. Who is the elderly woman sitting by her?"

"That is Mrs. Gurney. She was Bessie's nurse, and since Carmen has had this trouble she has taken care of her. She is an excellent woman and thoroughly reliable. She is with Carmen night and day.

"Good! Well, all she will have to do is to keep on. I will tell Edith—I am going to get used to calling her that—I will tell her that she is not well enough yet to be out of the care of the nurse, and that I shall expect her to do, for the present, the same as in the past; that I am leaving her in the nurse's care because I love her, and want her to get well as soon as possible. I will promise, besides

that, to have a room close by, so that I can be called quickly if I should happen to be needed. I think that this will satisfy her and make things all right."

"Well," McAllister said, "perhaps it will; I only hope so; for if it won't I don't know what we shall do. It is the best we can manage"—he wrinkled his brows a little. "We 've got to go pretty far with you. She is bound to be more or less affectionate, the same as she was tonight, and you can't repulse her. At the same time, as of course you understand, I shall expect you to be as ingenious as possible in heading off those demonstrations. God! What an affliction it is that she should take this freak!"

He drew a long breath, and looked discontentedly off across the water.

Hamil's short lips closed a little tightly, and a crease came between his heavy black brows. But this was only for a moment. A second thought put him in the father's place, and the cloud vanished. He said pleasantly, but not without some trace of quiet dignity:

"I appreciate your position, and will do the best I can with mine. At the same time, mine is a difficult one, and you will have to keep in mind that it is so. In a sense you will have to regard me as you would your family doctor—as placed on my honor. It is true that you know nothing about me, but taking me was on the theory of 'any port in a storm,' and it was your own choice."

"Oh, that 's all right—it 's all right," McAllister returned hastily. "I did n't mean anything different. As for trusting you, it is n't nearly as much as we trust family doctors, and you have a face that is a warrant for confidence. I am a good judge of human nature, as I have needed to be, for I have had to trust men, and I have seldom made a mistake. Yes, I am sure you are all right, and we 'll go ahead."

"Very well, then. And thank you for your good opinion."

This was said pleasantly, but with a businesslike brevity. However, they had now pretty nearly threshed the matter out. In

fact, McAllister here made a motion as if to return to his party; but he apparently thought of something, and stopped. He asked:

"Where were you bound?"

"To London and then to New York; but I had no particular aim about it. The change will make no difference to me."

"I see. Well, you won't need to change that part of your plan. We are bound for the same places. After that we go for a short time to Newark, and then to the coast of Maine. I own a little island there, and we shall rusticate for at least a few weeks. After that we go back to Newark. Newark was n't my original home," he explained reminiscently, "for I was born and brought up in Massachusetts. When I was a boy I worked on a farm there. The way I came to live in Newark was because it was my wife's old home, and since she died it has seemed like remembering her to live there."

They had both turned now, and were going back to the party. McAllister added a last word:

"Suppose you take Carmen aside and explain to her what you just said? Tell her why it is that you can't be with her all the time, and that she must keep on for a while as she has been doing. You can say, as you suggested, that you will sleep close by, so that she may feel that you are near her. We will see, in that case, that it is arranged so."

"I had it in mind to take the matter up with her at once," Hamil said.

He happened to look at Carmen just then, and thought that she seemed a trifle uneasy.

"We had best go back now," he concluded.

As they came up, Carmen shook a chiding finger at him.

"You are slow! I take it, though, it was papa's fault. Sit down here, now, and talk to me."

"Certainly—or, wait! Why not take a little walk? We can have a small private confab, as well as he and I. It is a good place where we were just now."

"Oh, that will be lovely!" She jumped up delightedly. "Don't you *dare* to follow

us!" she severely warned the others. "This is to be strictly and absolutely private."

Bess and Mrs. Gurney, taken unawares, looked a bit blank. McAllister, however, managed to gesture a hint.

The poor girl gaily took Hamil's arm, and they went off to the little nook.

Certainly this was an adventure for the young man, and one, as he might well have thought, without precedent. At least, he was likely to have a practical understanding of the old saw about the "tangled web," that being the product of our first regular practice in deception.

One bit of this tangle was the three names that he was carrying, and must keep judiciously apart. First, he was John Dana Hamil, secondly, he was John Dana, and thirdly, he was Jack Beauchamp.

Why he was John Dana may as well be explained here. It had come into his head that it would simplify his position with McAllister, and make it a little easier to do business with him, if he pretended that he was poor,

and he was afraid that his last name might lead to suspicions. It was a name well known in Newark, for his grandfather had founded the family fortune there, and out of the two or more millions that went to make up Hamil's present possessions a considerable part was invested in Newark real estate. Hamil managed this property chiefly through agents, and was seldom there in person, but he thought it well to keep the name itself out of sight. For this reason he had lopped it off, leaving the whole simply John Dana.

But this bit of deception was easy. He had now before him something of quite another sort. The piece of loveliness that thought she was his wife was cuddling up to him, and looking up in his face in confiding delight. He began to see dimly the sort of task he had undertaken.

CHAPTER III

CONFIDENCES

BUT nevertheless he did not waver. His course once settled, it was always his way to go perseveringly, perhaps doggedly, ahead. He smiled down now at the confiding face, and drew one of the cuddling hands into his.

"Listen, dear. I told you I had something particular to say, and now that we have this good chance I want to say it. You will promise to listen?"

"Yes, Jack, of course I will. I am glad of any excuse to hear your blessed voice. It has been so long, don't you see? Say on."

"It is about your health. You seem well, but you know that your head has n't been exactly right, and, in fact—you may as well know—that is the reason why the doctors thought I had better go away. They believed

that you should have as little to think of as possible, and that your mind should have an entire rest. They did n't even mean then that you should travel, but as you were restless and uneasy they finally consented to it. This part, of course, you already know?"

"Yes," she replied, frowning a little, "I do know about it. But I am not satisfied about the other part," she went on, "for it seems that father and my sister deceived me. They said they did n't know where you were. It would have been better if they had come out with the whole truth. I am not a child, to be mislead with quieting lies."

"Oh, but they did n't really lie to you," he hastily returned. "They did n't know just where I was. I was restless, and missing you as I did, I could n't stay in one place. I kept better track of them, though, than they did of me, for you see, when I thought it would do to break the doctors' edict, I came. I had heard that you were much better. To make sure of this, though, I did n't let you know that I was abroad. I wanted to watch you,

and see just how you were. In a few minutes I should have come forward. The loss of the ring merely hastened matters. Now, you can see, we planned the best we could under the circumstances; if there is any blame it belongs to us all, but we thought we were right."

He surprised himself by the honest way in which he reeled off this yarn. To be sure, though, there was a saving bit of sincerity in the defense he was making for the others; and then, behind it all, was the general motive—lofty enough, certainly.

The beautiful brows smoothed out before his earnestness and seeming candor. She drew a little breath, and rested her head against his arm.

"Oh, it was all right, I suppose; and I am not a judge of the condition I was in then. Let it go. Only, I am myself now, and there are to be no more separations. That, of course, is understood."

"Certainly." He thought the occasion warranted putting an arm gently across her

shoulders. "Henceforth I shall keep Edith under my wing."

She did not notice that he very slightly accented her name. It was a bit of reservation that he almost unconsciously made. But the ice was broken now, and he must proceed to the real business in hand.

"But of course," he went on, "as to my remaining with you, we must be governed by regard for your health. You must keep the nurse with you, and in general must follow the doctors' other directions. If not, your father will think it his duty—I mean, we shall both think it our duty—that I go away again. But as the plan is now I shall always be near you, and at night shall have a room close to yours. You understand all this, don't you, and will agree to it? You don't want me to go away again?"

Her face clouded and unclouded again while he was speaking. But now, as he anxiously waited for her answer, she turned in his arms, and put up her face.

"Kiss me. Everything shall be as you think

best. Only don't so much as hint at going away."

Tremendously relieved, he kissed her. The victory seemed as good as won. And now he began to see that she was in many things even more childish and impulsive than he had supposed. Even her kiss was like a child's. It was frank, light and quickly over with. She loved him, but with a strange sort of unknowing simplicity, and, with the natural woman in her forgotten. She wanted to be with him, she felt that she had a right to be, and she was ready to quarrel with those who would withstand her; but here, barring her innocent cuddlings and pettings, her arrested nature stopped.

In his relieved mood, and almost without knowing it, he put his cheek down to her head, and they were for a moment silent. After all, this was no light appeal that she was unconsciously making to him. The very nature of it—the almost bewildering trust, the crying out to him for his love and protection, the impetuous and undoubting way in which she had

claimed him, yet with the child incarnate in a beautiful woman—these were gripping him in a way that nothing in his whole life had ever gripped him before.

It was with a little effort that he finally roused himself from this mood, and returned to the practical issues. It was time, because he had accomplished what he came for, and good faith required that he should not stay beyond that.

"We had better go back now," he suggested. "This is a beginning, and next time it shall be longer. I want your father to feel that I am careful of you, and that I have not forgotten the doctors' orders."

Rather to his surprise, she did not object.

"Oh, we 'll go back, then," she agreed. "But as to the doctors, we have had three, and no two have thought alike. But of course you know all about that, for you were in the plot." She laughed, and pinched his arm. "But I have forgiven you, have n't I? Oh, yes, and *manlingo saldo il mio proposito.* Does that

sound natural? Or have you let your Italian get rusty?"

This might easily have been an awkward question, but luckily Hamil was pretty well up in Italian. He answered promptly, using Tuscan as good as her own, and said that he believed he was not very rusty. "By and by," he added in English, "we will have one of our old-time talk-fests."

To which she gaily answered: *"Mi rallegerò,"* and let him bring her about-face.

Hamil concluded that it might be wise to seem frank and open with regard to what had passed; and so, when they were back, and sitting in a little circle, he told McAllister the substance of the talk. "So you see," he wound up, "Edith is as practical and sensible as ever, and is willing to do whatever is necessary for her health."

"No, with one exception," she intercepted. "Wait, papa. Listen! Jack and I are not to be separated again. That is the exception."

"Oh, that was already understood," the old man tossed his head, and answered. "Yes, certainly, Jack is a fixture."

"Very well, then." She patted one of Hamil's hands, and seemed content.

A little later the party broke up. The women went below, and the Major and Hamil were left alone. The old gentleman had rather impatiently got rid of the valet also.

"I don't need that fellow a bit," he remarked, as the man slipped away. "I had a little fainting fit once; the girls went into a panic, and made me get a human shadow. But I leave him at home when I go to the island, and they can't make me budge on that. Not but that he's well enough, for he's as quiet as a mouse, and knows his business; but his presence is sort of humiliating."

"I think I understand," Hamil said. In fact, he was sure that he did, for he himself could not endure the constant attendance of a body servant.

"At the island," the old man went on reflectively, "I about half do as I want to. We

don't have many servants, and as I own the island—

"But," he broke off, "what am I gabbling about that for when there 's something so important waiting? I want to say that you managed the business with Carmen first-class, and you can't tell how relieved I am."

"Well, I am glad to be of that much use," Hamil said. "But, after all, what I did was n't hard. Edith—I want to call her that, to get used to it—she was very willing to do as I wished. In some things like this, at least, I have found her almost like a child, and needing pretty much the same management."

McAllister assentingly nodded.

"I see that you understand. Yes, in many things she is almost like a child. The exceptions are the power of her brain when she wants to talk on a literary subject, or anything of that kind. Then her mind is quick and generally as clear as crystal. She can write a sensible letter, too. And handle figures. Sometimes it almost seems as if—

"But I don't believe it, either. I was go-

ing to say, it almost seems as if the theory of one of her doctors is true. I mentioned that a little while ago. It was that dual personality business. Hang it! I don't believe in it, and yet it is strange. Why, when the girl is herself she knows all about what she does when she is off! She grieves about it, too—grieves terribly! But on the other hand, when she is the same as you see her now she does n't know anything about her true self. In fact, she does n't believe there is any such person. Astonishing, is n't it?"

The concluding question was, in truth, a concise interpretation of Hamil's feelings. He admitted that it was, and added:

"Still, I have heard of a few such cases—that is, somewhat like this one. . . . Oh, I meant to ask—how long has this spell lasted? I infer that it has not been continuous since it first came on. You said she was taken about two years ago?"

"Just about. Yes, she has been herself two or three times. The last time was about six months ago. She was all right for a week."

"I see. And are the changes abrupt? Can you tell when she is going to be herself, or the reverse?"

"Can't tell a thing about it. Once she went out of the room fully herself, and in ten minutes she came back all wrong. None of us ever happened to be with her, though, when the change took place, so we don't know whether there is any struggle over it, or not."

"Well," Hamil thoughtfully commented, "I should suppose, from all that you say, that there is final hope. Don't the doctors tell you so?"

"Yes, they rather think so," the old man answered somewhat dubiously. "They don't dare to be very confident, though, and of course they have no way of being sure. Still, I am bound to keep up hope."

"Certainly you are," said Hamil with hearty assurance. "Why, she is young and robust, and—well, not being able to compare her with 'Carmen,' to me she is wholly lucid."

"Yes, that is true, and of course it is encouraging." He brightened a little.

Hamil thought a moment, then smiling a bit said:

"I shall have to watch out, or I may find myself in a predicament. If she should come to herself when I happened to be playing the attentive husband there might be a scene. At least, I should be likely to find myself suddenly *persona non grata.* My only hope of any mercy would be the fact that she knows, you say, what she does when she is not right. But even then I should be a living reminder of disagreeable things, and should think it considerate to drop at once into the background."

"Oh, I don't think it would be as bad as that," McAllister dissented. "Carmen is n't a fool, and though she might feel somewhat embarrassed, and so forth, yet I can't believe that she would carry it further.

"But, anyway, if you did think it best to drop into the background, as you say, I should n't want you to leave. One swallow does n't make a summer, and the first thing we know she might be the other woman again.

Then the cry would be for 'Jack.' What the blazes would I do?

"Say! You 'll stand by me for a while, anyway, won't you? I mean, no matter what sort of reception Carmen in her right mind should happen to give you?"

"Oh," returned Hamil with one of his quiet little smiles, and a gleam in his black eyes, "I guess you won't have to worry about that. I have enlisted for the war."

"Good! That relieves me. Yes, it surely does."

He took a pipe from his pocket and began to fill it.

"Don't you smoke? I have some cigars."

"Thank you, I don't smoke."

The old man got the pipe to drawing, and then reflectively said:

"As long as you are in the family, as it were, I will tell you something. There 's an English nabob that wants to marry Carmen. He 's the son of a lord. Good enough fellow, I guess, and if the girl ever gets fully on her feet it may be a match. You will see

him pretty soon, for he will visit me. He did last summer, but nothing came of it. She was herself the whole time—he has never seen her any other way—but though I know she liked him, she did n't seem to give him much encouragement."

Hamil was considerably surprised. Rather hastily he said:

"That seems a little queer. I should n't suppose that he—I should think that her condition would make such an idea impossible. Even if she should greatly improve, still,—well, I suppose that most any time she might have another metamorphosis."

"I know," the old man readily admitted. "And it is strange. But yet, it is so, and Quesencourt seems to be all kinds of earnest. The girl, as I say, is rather offish. But she is one to keep her own counsel, and I never felt like asking her. You see, her lucid spells have n't been very long, and I have always tried not to fret or bother her. There was n't any hurry, either, for if her trouble

should continue of course there would n't be any marrying."

"That should go without saying." Hamil put this in with emphasis.

"Certainly. Well, all is, we shall have to wait and see how things come. By the way, if Carmen should have one of her right spells, you would wonder at the change. Nothing childish about her then. She is n't stiff or haughty, but she is full of ginger and independence. Everybody admires her, and she is fine company. If only the good Lord would let her stay like that what a blessing it would be!"

"And yet," supplemented Hamil, speaking a bit low and almost as if to himself, "some of us might miss Edith. She has a personality of her own, even if it is n't exactly a real one, and if she went away for good, why, it would almost be as if she had died."

McAllister took out his pipe, and let the smoke go.

"To tell the truth," he said, "I have thought

of that, but of course—well, I could n't really wish her to be any of the time in such a state. But as you are speaking of it you remind me —Dr. Carlisle said of her that I had a double pearl—two beautiful natures in one body. Poetical, and in one way sort of comforting. Really, I thought so."

"*I* think so." Hamil got up. "I shall have to be excused. I have some neglected mail to look over, and after that I think I shall turn in. Good night."

"Good night, Dana—No, I mean Beauchamp. We may as well get used to that name."

McAllister settled back to further reflections, and a few more whiffs. And Hamil, minus the whiffs, but not the reflections, went on his way.

CHAPTER IV

BESS

AS this day ended, so the next began. Edith showed no sign of returning to Carmen, and Hamil was therefore able to continue in his newly assumed part. As far as he could see she was fully satisfied and contented, and showed no outward indication of irrationality. This in fact, was true almost to a disconcerting extent. That is to say, she met him the next morning with a quiet certitude that seemed to mean anything but madness, and with a smiling content that had no spark of apparent excitement in it. They were by themselves for the moment but doubtless that made no difference in what she did, which was to put up her lips for a kiss.

So far did this wonderful bit of mockery and cruel delusion embarrass him that for an instant he felt foolish and awkward, and could

not even make the relief and encouragement of the rest of the situation steady him through. He kissed her almost hastily, and felt a guilty impulse to retreat a step when he had done it. However, by an effort, he stood off the little panic, and after another moment or two was level with the requirements again.

Just then Bessie, in a kind of school-girl rush, turned the corner of the bulkhead where they stood.

"Oh!"

She pulled up short, prettily flushed, and with an air of rather clouded but yet pressing responsibility.

"We lost you, Edith," she put an evident check on herself and her mission, and deprecatingly said, "Don't you and Mr.— Mr. Beauchamp want to join the rest of us? It's almost breakfast time."

Edith—to give her the privilege of naming herself—looked inquiringly up into Hamil's face.

"Is n't she a plague, Jack? Shall we go?"

But Bessie looking at him now, instead of

her, sniffed and made a little impatient gesture.

"Oh, I can't go so far as to call sister Bessie a 'plague,'" he said coolly. "Especially I can't when she comes to give us timely notice of breakfast. We will go with you, Bessie."

The girl sniffed again, and tossed her head. But this was as far as she could very well go; it seemed like taking an unfair advantage of his position to ring in her name like that, but of course this was no time to protest. She took Edith's other arm; and Edith, who had not seen the little by-play, good naturedly suffered herself to be convoyed away.

Everything else for the day went along smoothly. There was so much method in the girl's madness that scarcely any person could have suspected that it was madness at all. Hamil was still obliged to keep in the foreground, but now Edith took his presence more as a matter of course, and did not assert him, so to speak, and he was thus able to play his part more quietly, and with less embarrassing prominence. She no longer broke out openly

in little bursts of affection, but instead was content to give him a tender glance, or a quiet hand-pat, or to slip her arm gently around his when she fancied a little promenade.

Certainly, if the matter was to go on at all, it could not go on better. Hamil felt surer of himself, being surer of her, and what was more, he was now able to play his part in a way infinitely more satisfactory to the others. Even Bessie, who had seemed to take the matter most to heart, was, for the time at least, pacified, and from treating him with a sort of distressed politeness with subdued flashes of distrust and resentment, was acquiescently civil. It was a hard-enough rôle at best that he was playing, and even this little softening and improvement was helpful.

From this time on, for several days, and, in fact, till they had started on their sea voyage, the satisfactory state of things continued. The Major lost the sharp edge of his worriment, and was almost resigned to the situation, Bessie was at least able to wear her mask without so much ado, and risk of discovery, and so

far acknowledged the general debt as to be rather pleasant, and Mrs. Gurney had dropped her first almost fierce watchfulness. The valet had said nothing from the first; his attitude was wholly one of non-interference; and in any case, he did not count. Taking it all in all, it was a pretty little winning fight for the young man.

What might be called the stage-trappings of the play had now become familiar to all. Hamil was at home as Jack Beauchamp, and it was seldom that anybody vexed Edith by calling her by any other name. It was in fact, a little amusing to see how all were bending to the absurd situation, and learning to take it as real.

"As true as you live," said McAllister to Hamil one day, "I am almost beginning to take this in earnest. Blazes! I don't know where we shall all finally land if it keeps on! Her delusions are so convincing that we are accepting them as the real thing. Anyhow, I shall pretty soon feel that the doctor is right, and that I have two pearls in one shell!"

This was early in the day, and later something a little different happened.

Hamil and Edith were sitting in steamer-chairs somewhat apart from the others, and for the previous few minutes she had been unusually quiet. She seemed distrait. But as he glanced at her, she smiled, and put her hand upon his.

"I have a call to the piano," she said. "Will you go down with me?"

"Certainly." There was nothing disturbing about this, for he knew that both her personalities loved music, and just now the sea was unusually smooth, and the motions of the ship easy.

He led her down to the piano. Nobody happened to be very near.

He looked over some music that was in the rack. "Do you suppose there is anything here you want? What do you feel like playing? What is the mood?"

"No, I don't want anything there. I just feel like letting out what is pent up in me.

Stand close by me where I can realize you and listen."

He left the music, and came up behind her. "I am ready, at attention, dear."

"Even though you are going to be a little bored?" She looked back and up at him.

"But you always were just so good," she complimented, "and besides, though you don't understand music, you have an artist's soul. At sentimental times at twilight you have asked me to play, and I have always known that you meant it. What was that little verse you once quoted to me? It began, 'Oh, take the lute this brooding hour for me!' What was the rest of it?"

Now, as truth is stranger than fiction, it so happened that Hamil knew the verse. He had seen it in print, pinned to the wall of a room in a London hotel. It had struck his fancy, and he had memorized it. Almost startled at this helpful trick of fate, and in a queer way, too, impressed, he bent a little nearer, and repeated the verse:

Oh, take the lute this brooding hour for me!
The tender lute, the hollow-crying lute,
Nor call me even with thine eyes—be mute,
And touch the strings—aye, touch them tenderly.

"I know that interprets your soul, dear," she said, nodding satisfiedly. "Now do you be mute, according to the song's command, and listen!"

Her fingers dropped on the keys, and after a tentative ripple, swept off in subdued notes that were quaint and sweet. She was wholly face-about now, and seemed to have launched herself without reserve into the music. Hamil, at first a bit discomposed, settled himself again at ease. He had been a shade startled when she had spoken of his ignorance of this art, for in fact, he was an accomplished pianist. Indeed, he had made a little sensation in some German musical circles. This was because of an assured strength, and yet a mastery down to delicacy, not often seen in combination. As one critic had put it, he "crushed the notes to obedience without hurting them." To be clapped thus summarily,

therefore, into the outer darkness of ignorance was a little surprising and disconcerting. He wished heartily that Jack Beauchamp was in this, as he had proved to be in so many other things, very much like Jack Hamil. He must now suppress himself along musical lines, and so deprive himself of what he had looked forward to as a delightful and wholly innocent pleasure.

But there was no help for it, and so now he made the best of the occasion, and attentively listened.

She was doing fugues and preludes, and he recognized things in Bach. To his surprise, as she went on, he saw that she was following the old music, and not the modern adaptations. She had a good touch, and sympathy, but he wondered how so young a person came to go back so far. Pretty soon she came to some rather trying accents, but managed them successfully, not falling into the pit of unseemly and unmusical noise, though, to be sure, she had young and responsive nerves, and good, supple hands.

She stopped after a little more of it, and he had to restrain himself not to applaud.

She let her hands rest on the keys for a moment, then, and he thought she was about to start afresh; but instead she turned and looked up at him.

"Do you like it? Have I struck your mood? Or, I mean, have I compelled a mood that you did not have at first?"

"That is it. You have compelled one."

"I can lead you in one thing, then, for all you are so strong. Do you know, I always gloated a little over that—to think there was this one superiority that I had? Selfish and silly in me, is n't it?"

"Not a bit! No, I am glad it is so. But I am not ahead of you in all those other things. Don't flatter me."

"Yes, you are. But I want it to be so. I want to be dominated. That is, I want to be dominated by you; nobody else."

She nodded decisively, as if this settled it, and wheeled from him again.

She played other things—rapid études,

snatches from concerts, bursts from operas, and unknown bits that had a barbarian suggestion; the more so that she played them with a kind of subdued abandon that reminded Hamil of the Gipsy touches in the off-hand performance of some of the great Hungarian artists.

At last she broke into a galloping something-or-other that nobody could have named or defined, and carried it on recklessly till it was plunging, as it were, over a precipice; then she gave her head a sideways toss, and abruptly stopped.

"I can't rescue it from death!" she laughed, and swung about on the stool.

"It is like you, is n't it," he risked it to say, "to take daring cross-country gallops like that?"

"I suppose so," she answered, rather indifferently. "I am tired of it now. Take me back on deck."

This time Bessie had prepared to neighbor with them and had a chair close by theirs.

"Music," explained Hamil as they came

up. "Edith was haunted by things that would not down."

Bess was looking a bit grave. Evidently it was still hard work for her to accept philosophically all the turns and angles of this trying situation. Particularly, the little side-talks and *tête-à-têtes* naturally strained her patience. It no doubt seemed to her sometimes—especially when she happened to be a little out of sorts—that by a slight use of tact Hamil could have avoided some of them. However, she had no real cause to be severe with him, and in fact did not at any time really forget how well he was doing, and doing with a task as delicate as any man ever undertook. Hamil was looking a little searchingly at her now, as if he had noticed her grave turn, and guessed the reason, and as if he thought he had said enough in the way of explanation. She hastily took another tack. She nodded pleasantly, and said that he could not surprise her with such news. "Edith climbs the heights of Bach and Beethoven, and goes down the valley of rag-time

jigs when the fit seizes her," she threw off jocosely.

Edith herself clapped down a yawn with her hand, and settled her head against the back of her chair.

"I am going to have a little nap. You two may go walk if you want to. Come back pretty soon, though, and make sure that my mouth has n't dropped open."

Hamil glanced inquiringly at Bess. For some reasons the suggestion suited him. Bess hesitated for an instant; but then, as Edith turned inquiringly her way, she nodded and jumped up. "Certainly. I 'd like to go. Do you want to, Jack?"

It was the first time that she had spoken to him quite so familiarly, and it cost her a touch of added color; but she braved it out unshakenly.

"Oh, certainly, yes," he answered. "We 'll take a look at you once in a while, Edith, and make sure about the mouth."

She snuggled down in the chair like a child, turned her face away, and shut her eyes.

The two caught step, and started off. The ship now had something of a roll, and Hamil offered his arm, but Bess sturdily rejected it.

"I like a chance with hands in pockets, the same as you have," she said. She thrust her hands into the side pockets of her short jacket, doing it in what she meant to be a mannish fashion, but which, in a taking little way, rather missed the design. Hamil jammed his hands into his own coat pockets, and so made himself comfortable.

They covered something of a stretch, their gait being a fairly brisk one; and then Hamil was ready with what he had planned to say. It was because he wanted to say it, and at the same time not seem too eager, that he had been glad of Edith's suggestion.

"You did well in backing me up just now," was the way he began. "I mean by calling me 'Jack,' and consenting to this walk. Such things help. I need what help I can get, too, for it is n't just the easiest job in the world."

He looked down at her. His voice had a certain weight of suggestion. Though she

was not looking up at the moment, yet she seemed to understand and faintly colored.

"Why, certainly it is a hard job," she said unhesitatingly. "What you imply," she went on, "is that hitherto I have n't exactly backed you up. I can't say that is n't so, and yet I am not sure I am wholly to blame. It has been a hard place for me, too. Still, from now on I will try to do better. You are frank in speaking out like this, but it is the right way. I am entirely frank and outspoken about it myself."

She was looking him in the face, now, a trifle flushed, but not in any way faltering.

His eyes met the girl's encouragingly.

"I am glad I have learned so soon to know you. Now things will be easier. I shall feel that you are standing in with me, and not barely putting up with me, and even at times watching me. Besides, it will be easier for you. Doing anything is always more interesting than looking on. Come close to us, then. Call me 'Jack,' at every decent opportunity. Don't wince when I call you 'Bess.'

Make the whole thing as real as you can. I can see that you 've got lots of common sense, and once we get each other right, we shall be *all* right."

He turned, and put out his hand. Bess brightened up and unhesitatingly and even heartily, gave him her own.

He shook it in businesslike fashion, and they started on again. "There!" he said. "Now the treaty is in full force!"

CHAPTER V

DISTURBING POSSIBILITIES

THEY did not walk a great deal longer, and when they finally paused before Edith she was awake and watching them, and smilingly made them sit beside her. She was bright and alert, like a child fresh from a nap.

Again Hamil saw that in some things she suggested physical immaturity; or, rather, a harking back to her very young girlhood. This condition he had already been prepared for. But it was also true that there were ways in which Carmen was present—suggestions of another personality that drove him away; somebody whom he did not know, that tried to come between him and Edith, and whom he repulsed.

But there were little manifestations that startled him. Bess had left on a chair a thin

volume, an English translation of the *Veda Brahmana.* Edith picked it up, and glanced at it.

"Where did you get this, Bess?"

"Oh, in a rash moment I bought it. I found it in a shop in Florence. It is beyond all accounts poky. I keep it around here in the chairs so that when people glance at it—there is no danger that anyone will steal it—they will think me profound."

"That 's a worthy motive. Is n't it, dear hubby?"

"Hubby" was a new word in the artless vocabulary of Edith's delusion, and it embarrassed Hamil. Somehow it was not exactly easy to play his part at such times. However, he did not outwardly show his discomposure, and answered her now with matter-of-fact readiness:

"I don't dare to criticize. Don't ask me why not."

Edith shook her head, and opened the book.

"Let me see, Jack, there is a whole lot that you don't know about this sort of thing, is n't

there? You haven't been grinding at it since you have been gone, have you?"

Now Hamil, in literature, as in music, was really of some little account. Therefore to see himself thus again summarily shut off, amused him, though on the whole he did not care. That is, he did not care this time, though he wished that she had left him the music. Still, depriving him of one thing in which he knew he excelled, made him dubious, respecting others in which he was doubtful, but knew might be brought up at any time.

"No, I haven't added much to my stock of that kind of knowledge," he answered.

"But you can read Dante, and don't need a translation. And at one time you were interested in the *Poema del Cid,* you know, dear—because he was a fighter? Tell Bess when he flourished."

"Near the end of the eleventh century," he answered with school-boy promptness. This bright pedagogical diversion was entertaining enough. Besides, she had called him still an-

other pet name, and this did not put him in a less agreeable frame of mind. He meant to be sensible, but to save him he could not help a queer, pleased sort of thrill whenever she grew intimate. He was ashamed of the feeling the next instant, and was disposed to be severe with himself about it, yet he always ended by accepting it, and sneakingly making the most of what she offered.

"Oh, I knew that," put in Bess. "Come, don't think I am the biggest numbskull ever!"

And so they went on until she was persuaded to sing, offering to get from the bottom of her trunk an old French ballad of which she was fond.

"We are not amusing Jack," Edith reminded her. "You know he can't follow us. He has music only in his soul."

But here Hamil found a chance to put in something for himself. It was a question.

"What is the 'Le Bijou' your father has mentioned?" he asked. "Is it your island? You spoke of it, Bessie."

"Oh, yes, surely," she said. "It is papa's

island. It is off the coast of Maine, and about fifteen miles from the mainland. You don't know about it, of course, because papa bought it after you went away. It 's an awfully jolly place. There was a little hotel on it once, but papa made it into a cottage—a pretty big one—and did a lot of other things to the island itself. We have golf and tennis, and we have plenty of boats. There 's a peach of a hall for dancing, too, and—Oh, most everything. To cap the climax we shall have people. I mean a few, you know. There 'll be Mr. Quesencourt—papa said he told you about him"—she caught his eye, Edith not noticing, and nodded significantly—"and besides him there will be Mr. Baum—he 's a Jew—a friend of father's—and Miss Winrose; she 's *my* friend. And, let me see, why Ledyard Appling and a college friend *may* come."

"And unless Ledyard himself does come the others won't count," murmured Edith.

"Oh, nonsense!"

But the girl did show a trace of extra color.

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The song was forgotten and she volunteered some more information about the island. It seemed that an ex-fisherman, with his wife, son and daughter lived there the year round and looked after the property, and that summers the Major took four negro servants with him. These were all from his establishment at Newark which he maintained whether there or absent, and were all of one family. The son and daughter had grown up in his service.

Hamil was interested, and listened closely. Just as she was finishing, however, an odd thought struck him, and at once gripped his attention. He let a remark or two intervene, and then put a question. He watched Edith's face as he did it, but took care that she did not notice.

"This Mr. Quesencourt is the son of an English lord, is he not?" he spoke to Bess.

"Yes, he is the only son and heir of Lord Bracenham. He is the Honorable Mr. Quesencourt, to give him his English title."

"Is he musical?" Hamil questioned further.

"Not to hurt." She laughed. "He plays a few chords of the piano. That gives him an accompaniment for the 'British Lion,' and 'Tim Curley.'"

"Then it seems," he said, turning now to Edith, "that you and he have a little more in common in a musical way than you and I. Do you like him otherwise? You know I never met him."

This was somewhat of a daring flight, for of course he could not tell whether her present self knew anything about the Englishman. Or, if she did know, he could not tell what she would expect him to know. On the other hand, he had noticed that she almost never spoke of people that in the past they were both supposed to have met, and he had come to think that her backward view ran into a kind of mental haze that she either could not or did not try to penetrate.

"Why, as to that," she said a little hesitatingly, "I—I don't exactly know. I mean by that I can't quite recall him." She looked a bit troubled, and slightly confused. "It

was before my sickness that I met him, was n't it, Bess?" she went on, turning to her sister.

"Yes, dear, some little time before." Bess looked questioningly and a little reproachfully at Hamil. The motive for these questions was not clear.

But he had found out all he wanted, and at once changed the subject.

"Well, never mind about him. I am merely glad to learn that he is as big a booby in the musical line as I am. And by the way, speaking of music, while I was gone I heard an old fellow, a pupil of Dreyschock, do some stunts. It was in the way of octave-playing. Of course I did n't appreciate it, but still I was surprised. I will tell you more about it sometime."

The chat drifted into other lines, and Edith fully maintained herself. There were no more lapses of memory, or signs of confusion. As later they were going to lunch Hamil got a chance for a private word with Bess.

"I asked questions about the Englishman," he said, "to test her scope with regard to things

that Carmen was most interested in. It would seem that she would keep an impression about the man she had thoughts of marrying, if she would about anybody. Yet he is hazy to her. I am beginning to understand her limitations," he still further explained, "and that is a wonderful help in my dealing with her."

Bess made a convincing show of being satisfied.

"Only," she said, slyly, as a last word, "I am not at all sure that Carmen, in her right mind, does *not* care so dreadfully much for Mr. Quesencourt. I know she likes him, for she has admitted as much. But I don't believe—"

She paused again and glanced doubtfully at Hamil's inscrutable face. Then she went lightly on:

"He is handsome and will some day come into a great title. And of course we girls are human—"

"Child, child," Hamil interrupted, "why do you tell me this?"

Again Bess surveyed him; then deliberately leaving him, she answered across her shoulder:

"Because you need it."

He found Edith, and looking down at her loveliness gloried in the conviction that Quesencourt, whatever his affiliations with the unknown "Carmen," could not participate in this sweet privacy. Then a gripping thought caught him: what would happen to Edith if she all at once—without the slightest warning—became Carmen; a Carmen to whom Quesencourt was acceptable,—and accepted; and then flashed back to Edith again—Edith, his wife! He caught his breath sharply, and forgetting all vows to himself, and all promises to Major McAllister, took both her hands in his and laid their palms upon his cheeks. She smiled confidentially, as if the act were the most natural thing in the world.

It was borne home to him that he could not leave her for long. He had assumed an obligation that he could not disavow. Not that it was a task, either. And he did not deny to

himself that she was strangely winning, and in her weakness made a powerful appeal to his strength. He was growing used to being necessary to her. It was becoming natural to take the first place in the care of her; to have the others yield it to him, and to feel that new and odd tenderness—something he never had felt in his life before—when she smiled her thanks at him, or held him close in her child-like affection.

Just how he might feel with her innocent personality suddenly withdrawn, he did not know, nor did he care to think. There was one thing certain; it was growing constantly harder for him to realize that she was unreal; the consistency of her behavior, of her every act and expressed thought, so made for an actual individuality—for an actual Edith. Imagination failed to transform her into the phantom that he had been told she really was. It was an impossibility to picture her to himself how she might seem as Carmen.

Once his absorption in this train of reflection led him unwittingly to utter the name; he

was looking directly at her at the time, but unseeingly.

"Carmen!" he muttered.

She smiled. "Jack!" she chided gently. "Don't you get the habit too. I don't like to be teased."

He quickly recovered himself and apologized somewhat incoherently; but, on his promise not to repeat the lapse, she dismissed it as of no consequence.

He put a hand around her elbow.

"Let us walk awhile," he suggested, helping her to rise. She responded obediently. Unconsciously his grasp tightened, at which she glanced up at him with a laugh.

"You don't mean that I shall get away?"

It came to him what he was doing and he immediately loosened his hold.

"Excuse me," he begged.

"No excuse needed. I like that grip of yours. It makes me feel as if I *was* yours, and could n't be lost from you again."

"Thank you, dear."

She had said such things before, and he had

answered almost in the same words, but this time he spoke low, and covered a faint tremor in his voice.

From this on, till they arrived at London, the strange conditions did not change. There were times when Edith was a little moody, and one day she was distinctly cross, but beyond this she maintained consistently her personality. She made a good deal of music, and at such times generally wanted Hamil with her, but now and then she slipped away by herself, and apparently preferred to be alone. Whenever she was cross she dealt more lightly with Hamil than with any of the others, though she was a bit peevish even with him. Of course he made nothing of it, though for an instant it took him a little aback, which showed once more how seriously he was taking her.

One morning when he appeared on deck, she came to him and took his arm.

"As we are walking," she said, "I will ease my conscience. I was a spitting cat yesterday. Will you forgive me?"

"There is nothing on my books against you," he laughingly answered. He tucked her hand farther under his arm, and in doing so patted it. "Everything is all right, dear."

"Good in you, Jack—ever so good," she said gratefully. "But then you were always the soul of patience."

"Don't praise me too much," he protested, "you may spoil me."

"No danger. Haven't I tried you long enough to know?" She smiled up at him triumphantly. "And it has now been—let me see—how absurd! I can't exactly tell. Ever since my sickness some things have been confused. Never mind. You know I have tested you."

"Oh, well, I won't contend with you," he said. "After breakfast shall we have some music? Can't you surprise me with some more old wine in old wineskins? You know you have already given me some unaltered things from Bach. By the way, how is it that you know the old music?"

He did not think that he was running a risk

to say this, for he supposed that she would be no clearer about one old matter of the past than another. As for the mention of her unusual rendering of the original music of Bach, he thought that she had probably forgotten their former talk, and might now suppose that she herself had pointed it out.

But it was here that he got a little surprise. She looked up at him quickly, and with puckered brows.

"Why, what do you mean? You know I did Bach with old Brundergurg, who would have fainted at any but the ancient music. And say, how did you know it was the old music? I am sure I did n't speak of it? Have you been using the time of your absence to gather in the old masters?"

He made the best of it, and laughingly put up a protesting hand.

"No! no! of course I have n't. You know that I have not had time, and never had the brains. As for what I know about Bach, it is all but nil. Only I did happen to hear the matter of the old music discussed, and some

fugues were used to illustrate. The music itself sort of stuck in my mind."

"Good for you!" She clapped him on the arm. "It was wonderful for Jack Beauchamp to remember that."

"Another bouquet, and thank you."

But, in fact, he was glad to be out of the little scrape. He had found out now that it was dangerous to mark out exact bounds, either for her memory or her observation.

Their stay in London was brief and when they sailed for the United States Hamil reconciled Edith to the brief parting which was to follow their arrival. He was to stay for a short time in New York, while they went to Newark, and was to join them at the island.

As the steamer turned her nose westward, Hamil felt that the first act of the strange play was over. He had sometimes thought of it as a farce; but it was growing to be something more—vastly and profoundly more.

CHAPTER VI

MORE KNIGHT-ERRANTRY

THE sane uniformity of Edith's conduct, which, oddly enough, had already made Hamil's task in a way difficult—to keep in mind that he was dealing with an unreal person—continued during the rest of the voyage. At New York, following their plan, Hamil for the time left them, and the others took train for home. At the last moment Edith was uneasy, and seemed a little suspicious and distrustful, but Hamil managed to quiet her. He promised once more to join her very soon, and said it with such earnestness, and such an honest look into her eyes, that she convincedly, though rather dolefully, smiled.

"Oh, well, I must believe you, then," she relieved him by answering. "Only, it must n't be for long."

"It shan't be. I will rush my business through, and take the very next train."

He said this with such emphasis that he rather surprised himself.

"Then kiss me, and go. The sooner you start, the sooner you will have that odious business over with."

They were in a sort of little nook by themselves, partly walled in by baggage. The others had left them for a moment. He took her face tenderly in his hands.

"Good-by for a short while, dear. God bless you!"

He stooped and kissed her. She caught his hands impulsively in hers.

"Honestly, Jack, are you going to miss me?" There was a sudden darkening, as of tears, in the uplifted and inquiring eyes.

"Am I—?" He stopped. His own eyes intensified before hers. "Why do you ask that? Don't you know?"

"I hope so, but I could n't be satisfied till once, and though they all said it was best, you said it. You see, dear, you did go away

and that my nervous state—but let that go now. All I want to feel sure of is that it won't happen again."

"It shan't. Edith, I swear that it shan't."

The impending sad shower turned to sunshine again. She laughed.

"That ought to convince anybody. Not but that I believed you before."

"Edith," he said, and his face lighted as with a sudden new thought, "I want you to promise me something. Listen, now, for it may mean a good deal." He spoke with impressive earnestness.

"Whatever may happen in the future, you will not blame me for what I have said and done lately, and what I may say and do to the same general purport, after this?"

Her eyes expanded a bit with surprise. She looked just a trifle dismayed.

"Why, what sort of serious and dreadfully solemn thing do you mean? You are very nigh giving me the shivers! Yes, of course I 'll promise that, or anything else you ask, but I don't at all understand."

"But you may later, dear." He passed a hand soothingly and caressingly over her hair. "And I want you also to remember this," he went on: "I am doing what I believe the situation calls for, but it may not be the best that could be done. Some things have been hard for me, and in more than one way. If you want to know all about it sometime I will tell you."

"Jack," she cried, positively losing color, and looking big-eyed into his serious face, "what do you mean? You frighten me! What has happened, or is going to happen, that you need to talk so? After all you have said and promised, you can't mean to go away again. Then what is it? Tell me, instantly."

He bit his lip, as if vexed with himself, but the next instant, meeting her troubled eyes, laughed. He took her chin in his hand.

"You are off your course. Come back. Everything is all right, and I did n't mean anything that had a dark and dreadful intent.

It was only an innocent something that you may wish to consider later. Now, don't think any more about it. There is only a little while before my train-time, and let 's improve it by cheerful talk. Remember, when you get on that island, have a full ice chest. I am bound to be as hungry as a shark."

She brightened, and promised. And so he got her away from the dubious subject. Whether, as Carmen, she would be able to recall the scene was of course a matter of conjecture.

At the last moment, as he was about to board his train, they all shook hands with him, and Edith put up her lips for a final kiss. "That other did n't count," she said innocently.

Hamil laughed in spite of a little inward embarrassment.

"Certainly not," he unshrinkingly avowed. "Good-by! Good-by, all! See you on Le Bijou."

"Don't forget to wire us, so we can meet

you with the launch," at the very last moment called out Edith. "The wire goes to Seal Harbor, remember."

"I am not in the least danger of forgetting," he answered. There was a suggestive emphasis in the way he spoke that he was willing should please and cheer her.

He waved his handkerchief to her from the platform of the car, as he saw her standing where he had left her, and looking, as it seemed, lonesomely after him. She responded with her handkerchief, and they kept this up till the train rounded a curve. It was with a queer and new sense of disquiet, and of something missing, that Hamil at last settled down inside the car.

He made short work of his business in New York, and two days later sent the promised message, and started. The message came very near to being sentimental, but at the last moment he restrained himself, having discretion in mind. There were others besides Edith and himself to think of. This was what he finally wrote:

Shall reach Seal Harbor at 5 p. m., June 20. JACK.

Well, it was at least a little compensation that he felt it reasonable to sign in this way, for any other would seem strange to Edith. He even smiled at the bit of advantage that he was thus able to take.

On the last stage of the journey, which was on the little steamer, he was much on deck, and walked a great deal. When finally the landing at Seal Harbor came in sight he stopped at the rail, and continued there till things on shore took on more understandable shape. There was something of a gathering on the wharf, and Hamil did his best in trying to bring features and individuality out of the white patches that at first stood for faces. At last he was able to get a little definiteness, and then more, and the somewhat crowded figures at the same time cut definable shapes. But there was no face or form that he was looking for. Not only was there no Edith, but there was no one else of her party.

It must be that something had detained her, and though his face sobered under the disap-

pointment he summoned a bit of his pluck and optimism, and went back to make sure of his baggage. After landing he took a turn about the wharf; but though two launches meanwhile came in, neither brought any of the McAllister party. He thought again that perhaps some commonplace accident was the matter, and let out his patience another hitch, though now he was really on the verge of fretting. The whole thing was more of a strain than he could have imagined, and this, of itself, as he came to realize it, brought a twinge of humiliation. There was no need of going to silly lengths in this business, however piquantly-fascinating it was, and least of all he could not afford to be childish. He would n't be, either, but would quietly sit down somewhere, and read his newspaper. It would be scandalous if he could n't muster sense enough for that.

He crossed to a pile of lumber, and dumping his overcoat on a plank, made an elbow-rest of it. Then, having resolutely done so much, he permitted himself a little conces-

sion, and took another long and careful look seaward.

The low westerly sun threw a back-slant that edged the eastern sea-brim with a steely glitter, and it was not easy to be sure of anything that Hamil could make out looked like a boat. A sea-bird flickered, and sweepingly flashed out white, and then turned a dark edge again, and in one quarter a fixed blue-black hummock, meaning an outlying island, cut the sea-brim, but this was all.

Coming down to his paper, once more, he was about settling himself to read when he noticed a woman rather near him. He had previously seen her on the boat, and had observed her then with a little passing interest. She was rather small, but was gracefully straight and upright, and had almost a fashion-plate figure. Her fine hair was nearly a white-yellow, her eyebrows and long eyelashes were darker, and she had a sweet, artless sort of face. Her clothes, nevertheless, showed sophistication, for though they were plain, they bore the mark of metropolitan

fashion, and revealed daintiness, along with their simplicity. The shirt-waist was of fine, tawny linen, with a rolling collar, giving the chance for a blue four-in-hand, while the skirt was dark blue, and just short enough to show half of the substantial, small outing boots. Her hat was not over-large, and was becoming to her, though it took the steadying of a little ringed hand once in a while to hold it against the breeze.

She had the burden of a shopping bag, and of a sun umbrella, and she had tossed a blue loose-coat on some of her baggage.

It was hardly in human nature—a man's nature—to ignore unqualifiedly such a dainty bit of flesh and blood, and Hamil, who had lost sight of her on the boat, did not dismiss her summarily from his observation now. In fact he took time to complete his earlier observations. An author, speaking of his fellow male creatures, has said: "A man may love one woman with the warmth of a simoon, and at the same time feel a good healthy south wind towards a dozen others." This may ex-

plain—except that it overstates—Hamil's renewed interest in the attractive young woman, impatient as he was even to an extent which surprised himself, to see Edith again.

But at this point, as he was letting himself look at her, she glanced at him. She caught him fairly in his little stare, and her innocent blue eyes expanded a trifle. Then she slightly frowned, and turned away.

Hamil sniffed vexedly and disapprovingly at himself, and squared around to the neglected paper.

Perhaps ten minutes later he looked up, and found that almost everybody had left the wharf. An official of the boat company was locking up some baggage in a storehouse, and the young lady was at the farther wharf-side; otherwise, two young men who looked like dressed-up fishermen were the only persons in sight.

He thought he would look again for the launch, and got up, tossing away the paper. At the same time the two young men came along, one awkwardly lighting a cigar. His

black soft hat was tipped to the back of his head, and he walked unsteadily. The other man was deeply flushed, but walked well, and, at least, was not so drunk as his companion. The two headed at first in the direction of the girl, but finally veered, and stopped at a pile. The drunken man found this convenient for support, and at last got his cigar into action. The other turned his attention to something in a pocket. Presently he dug out a clay pipe, which he leisurely filled, looking once more at the girl, who, facing the other way, did not see him. When he had jammed the tobacco down with his finger he reached out his hand for his friend's cigar. The man did not happen to notice him, whereat the man of the pipe swore roundly.

"Give me a light, will ye?" he wound up. "What kind of a drunken doper be ye?"

At this the girl looked around and Hamil turned to see whether the wharf official was still there; but he had gone. As he turned back the girl was looking towards him and he walked slowly her way.

The swearer had meantime got his light, and was puffing at his pipe. Soon he felt again in a pocket of his ready-made black coat, and this time fished out a paper bag. He untwisted the mouth of it, and walked over to the girl.

"Won't ye have some kisses? I guess they ain't up to the real ones, but I think mebby they 're sweet."

"No, I thank you," she said. She instinctively backed away a step.

The man did not have a bad face, but it was big, mahogany brown, spiky with a three-days' beard, and the eyes were swimmingly watery.

"Oh, wal, that 's all right," he grumbled. "Ye need n't have any if ye don't want to. All the same, they ain't too bad, for I sampled 'em."

By this time Hamil was pretty close. The girl indicated his coming by looking that way, and the man glanced around and saw him.

Hamil tried to look serene, and as if he had not come for any particular purpose—

doing so to avoid trouble, for he thought the man might take the freak to round on him. So he did, wheeling fully around, his red and relaxed lips coming together, and his watery eyes steadying.

"What do *you* want? Come to butt in?"

"Oh, no," said Hamil pleasantly. "I merely took the notion to walk this way. It is a public place, I suppose."

"Mebby it is, and so 's the rest of it. Go and try it. I ain't goin' to have anybody buttin' in when I am holdin' a conversation."

Hamil turned to the girl. She had lost color, and was looking appealingly at him.

"Perhaps you had better go," she said. "I —I don't think this gentleman means any harm, and—"

"You bet your sweet life I don't!" he broke in. "And if I want to talk to a girl I am goin' to, and that 's straight dope.—Now Mr. Man, you jest light out, or we 'll have trouble right away."

Hamil did not look at him, except for a moment. He said composedly to her:

"I suppose there was no real need of my taking a hand, but I thought he was a little coarse and rough. Now that I am in I shall stay. Perhaps he 'll have sense enough to drop the foolishness here. If not he must take the consequences." He turned once more to the man. This time, there was a sparkle in his black eyes, and a faint show of a lump at each of his square jaws. He spoke with crisp directness.

"Will you go away, and mind your business, or not?"

The man looked a little surprised, for the change in Hamil's look and tone was decidedly radical. Yet it could not truly be said that he hesitated. As if from habit, he gave his trousers a hitch, and walked out into the wharf. Near the corner of a pile of boards he stopped.

"Jest come over behind these boards, and we 'll fix things."

Hamil smiled; but before answering looked at the other man. The fellow had evidently got some idea of the trouble into his head, and

had just pushed out from his pile. He was fumbling in a hip pocket.

"I thought something of that kind might happen," Hamil said quietly to her. "I will take away his gun, if that is what he has, and then accommodate the other party."

Before she could answer, he whipped off his coat, and started at a light walk for what might prove to be the armed force. As he got near the man jerked his hand clear of his pocket, and there, truly enough, was nested a little revolver.

The girl cried out, but there was no need. Hamil suddenly made a dart—amazingly quick for so big a man—and before the pistol could be aimed, his hand shot in and clasped the wrist. There was some movement or other, the man shouted out in pain, and then Hamil, pistol in hand, was walking back.

"On the whole," he said as he came up, "we had better make a safe deposit of this."

He flung it into the water.

"Now, my other friend. Excuse me for keeping you waiting."

The challenger had come forward a few steps, but stopped with this. If he had begun to think he had made a mistake, he did not show it. Instead, he threw off his coat, and walked out of sight behind the pile.

"Oh, don't go there!" intervened the girl at this point. "Don't fight. Let's go away. I don't believe they will follow us if we go up to that house. You can send for an officer then."

"There won't be much of a fight," laughed Hamil. It was n't exactly a pleasant laugh, to be precise about it. The prehistoric man was somewhat in evidence.

He took off his hat, tipping it to her politely before he parted with it, and when he had laid it carefully with his coat, he crossed over, and turned the corner of the board-pile.

CHAPTER VII

DISCONCERTING DISCLOSURES

THE girl drew a sharp, excited breath, and as she could not see what was going on, sat down on the heel of a pile, and nervously listened.

Judging as a woman ordinarily would judge, Hamil had no particular reason for what seemed his absolute confidence. True, he was a head taller than his adversary, who was, in fact, rather short, but he did not seem greatly to outweigh him, for the man must scale nearly two hundred pounds. The fellow, besides that, seemed to be hard in flesh, tough, and appeared to have no disadvantage in years or strength, and looked as young as Hamil.

But at least, the suspense did not last long. She heard a little sound like scuffling, the man swore, and she thought Hamil laughed,

and then everything was quiet. She started up, and as she did so Hamil called to her.

"Yes," she excitedly answered; and she made a dart of it to the boards, and turned the corner. She had already taken it for granted that Hamil had won.

It proved so, for he was sitting astride his opponent, who was flat on his back, with both arms spread out. Hamil was kneeling on the arms.

No blood showed on either man, and it looked as if it had been all settled at a dash.

"I am sorry to bother you," Hamil said composedly, "but this gentleman has something stubborn in his nature, and will not give up. Therefore, I am going to tie him. It will help me if you will kindly slip the cords from those loose clapboards, and hand them to me."

He nodded with his head, to indicate where the boards were.

"Oh, yes," she responded at once. "I am awfully glad you did n't have to hurt him, and did n't get hurt," she added.

But before she could start the man himself spoke up.

"What you goin' to do with me?" he sullenly asked.

"Tie you to a pile, and send for a constable," Hamil answered promptly. "I 'll take your friend along," he explained further, "and then he can't untie you, nor get himself into any more trouble."

"It 's all off," he growled. "Let me up, and Jim and me will light out. I 've got some folks that are sick, and I don't want 'em to worry. They 'll do all kinds of stunts at yellin' if I 'm 'rested."

Hamil instantly jumped up.

"I 'll take you at your word. Go ahead, and make yourself scarce. You 're not fit to be around here, for you 're just drunk enough to be ugly. Take the other fellow along with you. He 'll have a lame arm for a while where I twisted it, but that was his own fault. Drunken men can't be trusted with guns."

The man glumly unrolled his sleeves, and covered his great hairy arms. Silently, too,

he put on his vest. The girl noticed that Hamil had not taken off his.

Hamil said no more, and the man, not looking again at either of them, walked off.

Hamil waited a little before going to pick up his coat, for what reason the girl could not at the time see.

"He 's a plucky brute, after all," Hamil commented, as now they saw the fighter and the other man slouching off.

Now she understood what the little delay in following the defeated fighter had meant. Hamil would not humiliate him by seeming to dog him out, and she glanced at her protector approvingly.

"What I am thinking the most of," she said, "is that you got out of the trouble so well. He looked like a strong fellow, and in spite of your size, I was afraid he would be too much for you."

"Well, you see he was n't," he returned, smiling.

"You must be extremely powerful," she admiringly and almost awesomely commented

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as she looked from her little height up to his great one, and seemed to be struck with the almost absurd contrast.

But he did not appear to be noticing that, and was, in fact, listening, rather than observing. Again the cave man stirred a little within him, noting her praise of his physical might. So must our ancient sires have been moved after laying down victorious club or spear, and hearkening—perhaps pretending not to hear—the admiring gutturals of the cave wives. "Oh, yes, I am strong," he modestly answered, "though, to be sure, that is n't all there is to fighting. Knowing how to handle yourself is a big item."

By this time they were well out in the wharf, and as they had no purpose in going farther, they slowly came to a halt and faced around, so that they had a complete range of the water, both, as if coming back suddenly to a matter for a moment forgotten, looked quickly and searchingly seaward.

A launch was coming into the harbor, and there was a white boiling of water at her bows.

She seemed to be approaching at driving speed.

"Oh, perhaps those are my friends!" the girl broke out. "I was fearing that they were not coming. They have turned from the right direction, for Mr. McAllister's island is off there."

"'McAllister's!'" echoed Hamil, "why I am waiting for McAllister's launch."

"You are?" She was not only surprised, but paid him the compliment of seeming gratified. "Then you are one of the guests. I knew there were to be several."

"Not exactly a guest," he corrected, "though—but I have n't time to explain about that now. If you don't mind I will introduce myself. Or I have a card."

He clapped his hand hastily in his pocket, took out his pocket-book, and after some fumbling whisked out a card.

She looked at it.

"Mr. Hamil—Oh, are you one of the Newark Hamils? No, I don't mean those that live there, but who live in New York, and

own a good deal of property in Newark? An aunt of mine—the one that was the cause of my knowing Bessie McAllister—she used to visit—"

But she halted at this point, puzzled at Hamil's peculiar look. It was almost blank, and he scarcely seemed to hear her.

"Pardon me!" he said suddenly collecting himself, "but this is a mess! I mean that giving you that card has tangled me up. I got hold of the wrong one. I had some others printed, but I must have put them in a different place. Miss—I don't know your name—I want you to do me a favor. Destroy that card, and consider that I am Jack Beauchamp. Wait; I will find a card with that on it."

He took out his pocket-book again, but before he could find the right card she was answering.

"Of course I don't understand, but tell me this! You really *are* Mr. Hamil, are n't you?"

For an instant he hesitated. Possibly he

might mend matters by a prompt bit of deception. Yet on the other hand, he had already gone far in the other direction, and then, he was a little tired even of the first well-meant bit of trickery. He brought out the other card, and while he was doing it decided.

"Here 's the card. It lies, for my name is really Hamil. But the McAllisters think it is—no, the dickens, they don't—they think it is Dana. I shall make you crazy, if I keep on! Listen. I am Jack Dana to all of the McAllisters but Edith, and I am Jack Beauchamp to her. It is all right—everything is all right, and I can prove it to you the first time I have a chance. Now, will you wait? Will you for the present call me Dana, except to Edith? Remember, I am Jack Beauchamp to her."

The girl had grown serious. Yet she seemed to be impressed by his apparent frankness and outright way. She finally said, with a little hesitation:

"Yes, I will do that. I will trust you, and

give you the chance. I don't see how it can do any harm. But there is one thing."

"Yes."

"You seem to be a close friend of the family, and being so you must know that Miss McAllister's name is not Edith, but Carmen, yet you call her Edith? Will you tell me why you do so? I don't understand that it is any part of her real name, but is only one that at times when she is n't just right in her mind she imagines is hers."

"I can't exactly answer you without going into the other things," Hamil said, "but I will explain that she has been in this cloud through the whole time that I have known her, and that she has insisted that all those around her shall call her 'Edith.' My relations with the family are such that I have been a great deal in her company, and naturally have called her what the others have."

"Thank you. Please excuse me if I have been too inquisitive."

"It is all right. Your questions were natural under the circumstances."

By this time the launch had done so well that the people aboard were almost plain enough to identify. Hamil and the girl walked down to the edge of the wharf.

"I think that is Mr. McAllister," she said presently. "I mean the one standing up in the bows."

"Yes, I believe it is," Hamil answered.

"And there are two men down in the low part," she went on. "I don't see anybody else, do you?"

"No; those must be all."

He sighed a little in making the answer.

A few seconds later settled all possible doubts; the man forward was McAllister, and the only others on board were two men aft. They were both strangers to Hamil. By their looks they were merely servants, or boatmen.

By this time McAllister had noticed them, and he waved his pocket handkerchief. They waved theirs vigorously in answer. The man who was steering sent the launch towards the slip, and the other man aft came forward, and stood by with a boathook.

At this last moment the girl turned rather abruptly, and with a smile to Hamil.

"Since we have been through such adventures together," she said, "I am going to be so bold as to go a little further. I will introduce myself. I am Miss Winrose, of Philadelphia."

He lifted his hat.

"Mr. Dana is glad to know Miss Winrose. The same is true of my other selves. I have heard Bess speak of you."

The launch stopped her chugging, being now close in. Hamil led Miss Winrose down the planks of the slip.

"Hello! hello!" called out McAllister. "Did you folks think I was never coming? At the last minute the plaguey engine broke down. The girls almost threw a fit, as they thought you would n't know what to think, or would guess that we had forgotten you. They 'd have come along, but it was a little rough, and I thought we 'd better not load the boat down."

"Oh, we had plenty of faith," said Miss Winrose.

"Acres of it!" backed up Hamil. He now saw a good and sufficient reason, both for the delay and why Edith had not come.

The man with the boathook did as well as possible in fending off, and also in holding the boat up to the slip, but nevertheless there was a decided and disconcerting lifting and sinking. McAllister reached out to steady the girl aboard, but Hamil motioned him back. The boat had soared and was sinking again, when he pitched his overcoat on board, and with a little stoop caught up Miss Winrose. She uttered a terrified little shriek; but before she had any further chance to object she and Hamil had cleared, and were on deck. He put her down, and steadied her.

"The shortest way," he explained.

"Oh, I suppose so," she managed with a little gasp; and: "Thank you very much."

"Don't mention it."

A trifle flustered still, she nevertheless

recalled the conventions, and turned to the Major.

"Mr. McAllister, this is Miss Winrose. I ought to feel acquainted with you, having heard Bess so often speak of you. She placed 'the Major' up among the stars, which I can believe was deserved."

"Oh, well, thank you. I wish you young ladies would say such pleasant things to us while we are young. I shall be glad to welcome you to our little spot in the ocean."

She had given him her hand, which he cordially took, and with a young grace that Hamil would hardly have expected, lifted his hat.

"And now come aft," he said, "where it is more comfortable."

The two men got the baggage aboard, and one of them shoved off. Hamil gave Miss Winrose the steadying of one of his hands, and all three went along to the standing room.

When they were in comfortable places on either side of the Major, they chatted for a moment, asking the usual conventional ques-

tions, and making the expected answers. Then the girl said:

"By the way, we had a little adventure just now. No, Mr.—eh—Dana, don't frown; I am merely going to skim over the matter. He had a short personal combat, Major, my insignificant self being the cause, and came off a glorious victor. He disarmed one foe, quickly wrestled down the other, and finally sent both about their business. They had been drinking, you see, and though one offered me some candy, he used strong language in doing it, and Mr. Dana thought it time to put in an appearance. That is all I am going to tell, and Mr. Dana can give you the rest."

"I should n't think there was any 'rest,'" Hamil commented.

"I suppose," remarked the Major, with an admiring side-glance at the massive bulk of the young man, "that there would n't be a great deal to a row that you were interested in."

"What did you hint just now about a man's getting no taffy while he was young?" pro-

testingly inquired Hamil. "Recall that observation, please, as unsupported by present facts."

"There, we will spare your blushes," put in Miss Winrose.—"Major, will you take me out fishing?"

"Will I! You may depend on it I will," he answered with emphatic gallantry.

"The girls go, don't they?"

"Sometimes. By the way"—he turned a little towards Hamil—"I was intending to say that Carmen, who has not been in the best of health, is much better. You asked me about her health, in asking about the others, and I said she was well. I meant a good deal by that. I meant she was again well mentally. God grant that this time it may last! You both know what her trouble has been, so I may as well speak out."

"Oh, I am *so* glad!" cried Miss Winrose.

Hamil rather gravely inclined his head. After an instant he put his hand on the old man's, and said, low-voiced:

"I congratulate you all, and her."

McAllister, showing by his looks that he was moved, grasped the hand on his, and as he held it, answered:

"I know you mean it. You have shown yourself a true friend, and one that has filled the hardest kind of place. This young lady does n't understand that, I suppose, but she will later.—And now it is going to be pleasant for all hands; and I want everybody to hoe in, and have a good time. Mr. Dana, I am going to say to you—no harm to say it now, for we don't care if Miss Winrose hears —I am going to say that Carmen appreciates your goodness to Edith. In fact, that is the very thing she told me to say to you. She knows all, you understand—everything that was said and done while she was under the cloud. She is n't much of a talker, Mr. Dana, and is far more reserved than Edith was, so at first she will probably seem a little new and strange to you; later you will get used to her. I will tell you, Miss Winrose, that even as Edith she was a wonderfully sweet and taking girl. Is n't that so, Mr. Dana?"

Hamil's head drooped just a trifle, but his answer was instant: "Make that as strong as you please, and even stronger, dear Major, and I will indorse it."

CHAPTER VIII

LE BIJOU

FOR the little time needed for the rest of the run Hamil was mainly silent. Night duskiness was now abroad on the sea, and the rounded haunch of land that opened ahead was toned down to a few general outlines, and almost to a severity of two colors, dark gray and green. That is to say there was a breaking out of rocks, and a clumping together here and there of low evergreen trees. On what looked from this viewpoint to be the crown of the land stood a low, broad house, belted all around with wide piazzas. It was probably weather-stained (artificially), but in this present light it was merely dusky, only not of a like duskiness to the rocks and the evergreens.

The landing place proved to be in a little bight on the west side of the island, and here

the rocks rose on the north and northwest, so that the boat came into a lee.

Hamil stood up. Just ahead was a little wharf, with a boathouse at the land side, and a steep path leading up from there to the top of the low cliff. He searched the whole range with one swift glance. There was nobody in sight.

The old fellow who was steering ran the boat up to the wharf, the big, lanky boy who acted as mate jumped ashore and made fast, and Hamil helped Miss Winrose out. McAllister, after giving a word of directions to his skipper, followed.

"I 'll take the job of pilot," the old man said, as they started up the steep path. He pushed by them, and Hamil and Miss Winrose went leisurely along in his wake. The path, by a good light, would not have been at all bothersome, but there were some stones and hollows, and as they came into the shadow of a clump of evergreens Miss Winrose balked a little, and Hamil thereupon took her arm.

She thanked him, and they were going on faster, but just then she gave an exclamation and stopped.

"Who is it?"

"Probably my imagination, but I thought that something moved just in there—beyond the open space."

She meant a place on his left, a few feet away, and where there was a little open nook. He was not for paying much attention, thinking that she could have seen nothing, when a dry branch snapped, and a stooping woman scuttled out into sight. She stood up straight in the opening and laughed.

"I was never cut out for secret service work; that's certain. I was going to creep down on you like What's-his-Name on the Israelites, but it's a flat failure."

Bess McAllister pushed out where they were, and caught Miss Winrose in her arms.

"Hello, lovely!"

"Oh, Bess, hello!" They kissed enthusiastically.

Hamil stood back, to give them room, and

meanwhile he was sweeping a glance elsewhere in the shadows. But there were apparently no more ambuscaders.

Bess next turned to him, and cordially put out her hand.

"How do you do, Mr.—well, I suppose we shall have to call you Dana now? You know, of course, that things have changed. Did you have a pleasant trip down?"

"Very."

They finished this, and started along again, Hamil now in the rear, and the two girls, hugged sidewise, as if they had been the Siamese twins, climbing along ahead.

Bess overflowed with questions, and answered a few. She soon had the whole story of the "battle" on the wharf, Miss Winrose this time telling it at her ease, and with unhampered impressiveness.

"Mr. Dana was a gentle knight, if ever there was one," she finished. "He made a fritter of the candy gentleman, and turned him over as if he had been in a skillet. I mean by 'he' the candy giver, and not Mr. Dana.

Yes, it was all gentle enough, and from this time on I shall hold him up as the sweetest-tempered fighting man ever. I hope this is n't too open for short acquaintance—not considering the circumstances. Is it, Bess?"

"By no manner of means. In any case, we are now out of civilization, where the 'best is like the worst,' meaning that everybody is good, but nobody is trying to shine. .Don't analyze that too closely. I borrowed part of it from Carmen, who probably had it all sorted, and fixed. Notice, I said 'fixed.' 'Fixed' goes here; it is one of the badges of uncivilization."

Hamil was silent through it all. Between them they had carried the talk prettily away from what one of them was pleased to call the "battle."

A few moments later they overtook the Major, who had heard Bess talking, and waited.

They were now on high ground, and had the whole sweep of the place, as well as of the darkened, indistinct shore, and the gray and narrowing sea. Lights sprang up in the

house, and made the closing in of night seem the more real. Hamil, in spite of himself, feeling a little lonesome and uncertain now kept his eyes on the house, and let Nature take care of herself. In fact, there was just now nothing cheering, or encouraging about her, but rather the reverse.

It was not very far, and Hamil said nothing on the way. Just as they were coming to some side steps—for the house faced the sea—a woman appeared duskily from some farther part of the piazza, and came to the head of the steps. Hamil did not easily carry figures of people in his eye, and seldom remembered their clothes, yet now his eyes lighted, and had the others been looking they could have seen a little flush mount to his face. He almost halted, but before Bess, who was next to him, could fairly notice it, he was moving on again. Bess flourished her hand and the woman answeringly flourished hers.

"I 've captured the whole bunch," Bess raised her voice and announced.

"Is it your sister?" asked Miss Winrose.

"Sure. Here she comes to speak for herself."

Carmen did not answer Bess, but she came along quickly. The light from the windows struck more fairly on her now. She had tanned a little, and her face had a distinct color against the fleecy white wrap around her shoulders. Her gown was white, too, as Hamil noticed, for as dull as his observation was, he did know that he had never seen her all in white before. He unconsciously tried to make out more—to see what Carmen was like.

Bess introduced her promptly to Miss Winrose. She got a little nearer to Hamil in the course of this, and he advanced a step. "And here is Mr. Dana again," Bess proceeded. "You don't need any introduction to him. That's all, and let's skip into the house. Supper is waiting, and for my part I am as hungry as—never mind about a simile."

She had rattled off this last part in a way that made Hamil think she was trying to make

things easy for him and Carmen. She must know that there was bound to be a little awkwardness, however well Carmen and Hamil managed, and naturally she meant that Miss Winrose should notice as little of this as possible.

Carmen had unhesitatingly put out her hand, and he had as promptly taken it. They could see each other's faces now, and for just one instant they looked, and without pretense.

She could have had nothing new to find out, and was merely confirming the old; he was exploring.

She was speaking as she looked, and he was ready with an unembarrassed answer. "It is pleasant to have you with us again," was what she said, and his answer was: "Thank you. I am glad to be with you all again."

And then he was free to print his picture from the film, for Carmen swung around beside Miss Winrose, and they all started along.

The first thing that was clear to him was that he was not surprised. She was almost prosaically like the person he had built up

in his mind. She of course had Edith's figure, but carried it just a thought more controlled, and not quite so lithely and girl-free. She could not change the color of her eyes, which must still be gray, with the wonderful dark brows and long black eyelashes, but he was prepared to find them withdrawn a little from their ready outflash, and with nothing left of the innocent freemasonry of wifely love; and it could not be otherwise than that this was so. And finally, the truest things about it all were the illusive ones—those which could not be catalogued, and set down in terms. For who could put in understandable words the "lightning shift" of a soul? It was simply true that whereas before he had known a dream woman, he now saw, but did not know, a real and calmly poised one. He had lost the virgin wife who had come to him out of the realms of fancy, and was now to get acquainted with a woman who was merely masquerading, as it were, in her flesh.

And absurd as it may seem, he secretly felt a little resentment towards the present woman.

He felt vaguely that she was an usurper—thus turning the fact exactly around—and her composure, and sureness in a way almost irritated him. Yet this was merely one of the phases of the workings of his troubled and still confused mind. He himself was hardly conscious of it. He was certain of little more than that he was trying hard and determinedly to reach adjustments.

They all trooped into the house, and Bess motioned them from the hall into the corner room where the bright lights were. There was plenty of electricity, and a small open fire besides. The furniture was massive, but there was a wealth of cushions, so that the austerity was, so to speak, only skin deep, and there was an alcove with more cushions. In the middle a great table was littered with newspapers, a little one was piled high with magazines, and in one corner was a writing desk. Time tables for trains and boats were pinned beside it. There were at least half a dozen calendars in sight, and at the corner of the fireplace hung one of the venerable

Maine almanacs. As far as getting around was concerned, and getting around on time, it seemed that a wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err.

"This room," said Bess, turning to Hamil and Miss Winrose, "was originally the hotel office, and we make a sort of office of it still. In fact, we call it by that name. It is the chief place of comfort, the rallying point for the clans, and the one that is never quite clean nor—thank heaven—quite in order! I introduce you both to it. May you find it as disreputable and lovable as we do."

They both laughed, and Miss Winrose said that she already felt the love part. It was really a bit chilly, and both of the visitors took settles near the fire. McAllister presently excused himself, saying that he had a few matters to see to, and a little later Bess asked Carmen to look into the supper question. For some reason there was delay, and it was a matter, as Bess asserted, that would not brook delay.

Hamil, who had already worked in several

observing glances at Carmen, here got a still better look at her. She had risen, and was standing in the full flow of the principal electric light. He saw another person in Edith's house! Her eyes were full-orbed with complete sanity, and a grasp of all they took in; certainly they were not Edith's child-trustful eyes, with seeming barriers of blank dream-walls cutting off the past. Somehow, as things with texts, or pertinent verses, will drift at such times into the mind, there came to Hamil—not literally applicable, to be sure, yet oddly suggestive—some lines that he had read:

As low—all quick—I leant,
  Two large eyes thrust me back;
Dark eyes—too wise—which gazed intent;
  Blue eyes transformed to black.

Heavens! how those steadfast eyes
  Their eerie vigil kept!
Was this some angel in disguise
  Who searched us while we slept;

Who winnowed every sin,
  Who tracked each slip and fall,

One of God's spies—not Babykin,
  Not Babykin at all?

Day came with golden air;
  She caught the beams and smiled;
No masked inquisitor was there,
  Only a babbling child!

But, in the vague way that he could be said to think the light thing out, he reversed the figures. The "large eyes that thrust him back" were the real woman's—Carmen's—and the ones that he wanted to look into, and that were not "too wise," were Edith's.

It was nonsense; yes, certainly, and Hamil tried to make it seem so. Carmen was excusing herself to Miss Winrose and to him while she went about the supper preparations, and he did his part, playfully saying that not to excuse her would be a crime.

After she had gone he pulled himself together, and went along so sanely and sensibly that Bess, even if she had been on the watch for any little upsetting, could not have detected any.

Pretty soon they had news from the kitchen of a short delay, something or other having gone wrong. Carmen disappeared again as soon as she had brought the tidings, and Hamil shortly afterwards found himself alone, for Bess carried off Miss Winrose. As Bess was going she spoke back, and told Hamil that now he would have time to establish himself in his room, and that she would send a servant to show him there.

He got up as soon as they had both gone, and fell into one of his ways, which was to work off too much thought by exercise.

But he had hardly taken two turns when the portière leading to the rear parts of the house was again switched aside, and Carmen looked in.

"Oh, they have gone?" she said, as she saw that he was alone.

"Yes, they just went."

"Perhaps you would like to go to your room? There is a lazy young colored gentleman that I think I can persuade to show you there."

"Bess—I mean Miss Bessie—has already arranged that for me."

He had stopped rather near her. Doubtless unconsciously, he was looking with open steadfastness at her. She faintly colored, and made as if to go. All at once it came to him that he had again overstepped polite bounds. He made a little impatient gesture, and suddenly strode almost up to her.

"Just one moment, if you please."

She had opened her eyes rather widely, and in fact, had looked a shade startled, but nevertheless, she had stopped. As he spoke, she fully collected herself, and pleasantly waited.

"It is an apology," he began with simple directness. "I was staring at you, and I did the same thing a few minutes ago. I ask your pardon."

"Why," she said, and she laughed a little, the color nevertheless deepening, "I freely forgive you. To be frank," she went on, meeting his look fully and unswervingly, "it was natural for you to do that. I am afraid

that in return I—well, I was not *all* the time looking elsewhere. But the circumstances are so *very* peculiar that I think we were both excusable. We will wipe it off the slate, then, and start over."

Here was at last a faint reminder of Edith. For all the dream-girl's gentleness, she could be very positive, and she had a way of saying things that in print would call for rather frequent italics; it appeared that Carmen had the same little trick.

What was left of the pucker between his brows smoothed out.

"You are very generous. I am sure that your offense was light compared with mine. And still, as you say, even what I did was natural. I did not mean to drag these past matters to the fore," he added apologetically, "for I can understand how disagreeable they must be to you. Let them all go. We will have a frank understanding to that effect. It may, after all, be more satisfactory than a tacit one."

She seemed a grain surprised, he thought, yet nodded.

"You are always a gentleman. Yes, the very flower of one, for—"

Somebody came into the room beyond. She turned and looked.

"Never mind, Henry. Come again in three or four minutes."

The man retreated, and shut a door after him.

"Now that we have gone so far," she said, "I am going to say a little more. I intended after a while to say it—when I should feel better acquainted with you—but it may as well be now. Let 's sit down a moment, and appear common-place. Somebody else may come."

She led the way to a chair, which he turned around for her. He sat down a few feet away. From this angle the light fell on her hair, which had the chameleon trick of returning a brightness of its own. It gleamed now like fine-spun gold. Here was another

reminder of the vanished dream-girl, and it brought his lips almost grimly together.

But she had begun to speak again, going on a little hurriedly, to be sure, and yet seriously. He leaned back in his chair, that he might not seem to be scrutinizing her too closely, and politely listened. However he felt how far he was on edge, he was managing to keep it all out of his face.

CHAPTER IX

WHO IS THE USURPER?

"TO go on with what I began," she was saying, "I want to try to put in words how I appreciate all that you have done. It is not only right that I should do so, but it is a pleasure. At least, it is a pleasure now, though I confess that it was at first a dread. It is a humiliation to be sick, and especially to be mentally sick, and in my case there was added a—was added an extra humiliation. It cuts me like a knife to talk about it, and I shan't.

"But to go back to you again," she pursued. "We all feel that you managed splendidly, and my father and sister say that they don't know what they should have done without you. From the time this new—new hallucination seized me you were their mainstay, and they never once had reason to doubt you.

And we all thank God, Mr. Dana, that it was you, and not someone else that appeared that night. Few men were ever placed in a harder and more bewildering position than you were, and few indeed could have acquitted themselves so well.

"And now I am willing, as you say, to let it all drop. Edith is dead—or I hope that in God's mercy she is—and Mr. Beauchamp has gone. Miss McAllister is here, and so is Mr. Dana. Though he is my father's secretary, he is also, while he stays, an honored guest."

She arose, and—just a little stagily, perhaps, but the circumstances were trying—put out her hand.

Hamil took it, and bowed.

"I thank you, Miss McAllister, both for all the good things you have said, and also for your generosity. But if you please"—she was turning towards the door—"I should like to add something to this clearing-up talk. It shall be brief."

She halted and turned to him again, expectant, perhaps a trifle startled too.

"Certainly," she acquiesced. "You have earned the right to add what you please."

"I spoke just now of your generosity. I think you must understand me as to that. You spoke of the times that I kept the faith, but not of the times that I faltered, and almost failed. I can believe that you generously charged these small lapses—that nevertheless, were not so small as they appeared—to the weakness of man-nature, and thanked God that they were no greater. Well, and I must say something right on this point. You will see the propriety and desirability of it, when I am through."

He looked her almost compellingly in the face, and though she drew her brows a trifle together—not at all after Edith's fashion—at the end she nodded.

"I promise to listen. Go on."

"To be certain of my ground I must first ask a question. Do you recall distinctly what I said to you the day I last saw you? It was just before my train started. I said: 'Whatever may happen in the future you will not

blame me for what I have said and done lately, and what I may say and do to the same purport after this?'"

"Mr. Dana," she protested, and now she darkly flushed, "I do not think that this is quite generous. You say yourself that I have overlooked some small matters where you—not in any coarse manner, to be sure—well, made fully enough of your opportunities. I attributed those small lapses to the—the temptations brought about by the circumstances, and also to a real friendship that you had learned to feel for Edith. I have no reason to change my mind on these points, and therefore why bring the matter up again now? If it is necessary to be plainer than I have been, I will say that it is all disagreeable as well as mortifying to me."

But he did not in the slightest degree flinch. Instead, his now very earnest eyes seemed to take on new insistence. At the same time, there was no reckless obstinacy, but rather a calm and even dignified implication that behind what he had said, and what was yet to

come, was a just and reasonable motive. She bit her lip, but she felt the opposition of her words swept away, and knew that she must yield. Saying no more she listened.

As if weighing his words, but with a feeling underneath that was not to be overlooked, he went on:

"And besides what I have just quoted, I also said: 'I am doing what I believe the situation calls for, but it may not be the best that could be done. Some things have been hard for me, and in more than one way. If you want to know all about it sometime I will tell you.' Now, Miss McAllister, you don't seem to want to know all about it, but I want you to. It is simply justice to me, especially since I see how far you are astray in one particular. The truth is, I guessed at the start that it might be so. After I explain the true situation, if my presence is then disagreeable to you it shall be removed. I will take the morning boat."

She looked a bit confused now, and as if no longer sure of her ground. It might be

guessed, too, that what he had said had aroused some curiosity. But however it was, she quickly answered him, speaking this time with a different note.

"No," she said. "There will be no need of that. There can't be. Say on, and if need be we will bury it all in one grave."

"It won't take long to say it. The allowance I wanted you chiefly to make—if ever you became Carmen—was this: that in all tenderness and all sincerity, I loved Edith. That is the whole of it."

He nodded calmly, and pushed back his chair. In turn, he seemed ready to go.

But she was not so well prepared. The dark and beautiful McAllister eyebrows went up and down once or twice, and the well-poised Carmen face lost something of its sureness.

"Why, in that case," she said hesitatingly, "there was, as you say, something that you had a right to add. It was a sort of justification. Not that you really needed it, for—" Something else seemed to cross her mind, and

she thoughtfully paused. "I am sorry for you, Mr. Dana," she said gently, and looking up in his face, "for now I see that there is a chance for you to be unhappy. I hope that at least you won't continue to be, but will be wise and brave, and soon be your old self. It was all a dream, you know, for Edith is dead, and her fancies and hallucinations with her. I do not believe that she will ever come back; I feel sure that she won't. I have a stronger grip on my real self than I had when I lost it before, and by the help of God, I will this time make a winning fight to keep it."

She spoke almost with desperation, and he answered only with a grave nod. Yet after all, there was a sort of fear and doubt under her seeming confidence, or so one might have guessed. In another moment this was plain, for all at once she went on:

"But if the spell should come back, then I hope you will be gone. If I end my days on account of it"—she reddened a little, and bitterly smiled—"if that happens, why let it. All the better. As for you, it would be but

chasing a dream once more, with always final disappointment. You must in your heart agree with me. In sense, you can't help it."

But she had one more surprise.

He walked very close to her, and in a way that startled her, looked down in her face.

"I don't agree with you. It is all the other way. You know nothing whatever about it. You remember my gentle kisses, and my almost fatherly ways, and you think that I can't be very hard hit. I was. I suppose that it is ungenerous to come out with such reminders, but I don't care. I can't always be muzzled and kenneled. I may have loved a dream, as you say, but it was a sweet and beautiful one, and such as I shall never see the like of. It may sound like raving, but I can't quite forgive you for acting the usurper. And now you *do* understand, you can't help it. Perhaps I am a little barbarous. If I am, forgive it if you can. But after all this you will agree that it is better I should go away, and not after a while, as you imply, but soon. Perhaps I had better not go in the

morning, as that might seem too abrupt. I will put it off till the next day. Meanwhile, you need not see much of me."

He threw his look past her, and the lumps showed plainly in his heavy jaws.

But he was not to give all the surprises; by a better distribution of things, he was now to receive one.

She gave way a step, as he seemed almost to overshadow her with his larger form, but at the same time, she gently put up a protesting hand.

"Mr. Dana! Wait!"

He turned a little, and looked down at her. There was a glint of excitement in her eyes, and a flush had sprung up in her cheeks. Whatever the change might mean, the philosophic poise with which she had ended her last speech was gone.

The puzzle of the change left him irresolute, and by degrees some of his fire died down. He nodded acquiescently, and politely turned wholly about. He even smiled, though rather glimmeringly.

"If you have anything more to say to the bear, say it."

"You are not a bear. You are simply frank and brave. I like that. Besides, we are at last on a sane and substantial footing. You have told me that you loved Edith, but almost resent my existence—Stop, it is what you meant. Good! I want it so. In turn I don't look on you in the least as Edith did, for you do not impress me in a personal sense —your looks, I mean. On the other hand, I deeply respect you. Now, why aren't we making excellent progress? You must stay, and we will be friends. Yes, and to go on in frankness, I can't quite help liking you better because you did love Edith so. She begins to seem to me now almost like a dead sister. I think better of her than I did, for hitherto she has been to me nearly like a robber. But if a man like you found lovable things in her she must be rather worth while. So you see," she laughed, "your explosion has done considerable good. It has reconciled me to my deadly enemy."

By the time she was through his face had wholly cleared. He laughed a little, joining with her.

Once more, and as by a common impulse, they shook hands.

"And now," she said, "it is time for Henry, and I have something to do with the supper." Adding a few words of Italian she nodded brightly, and for a fleeting instant he had a glimpse of Edith. It was the look, combined with the familiar little trick of the Italian windup.

Just then a door again opened and Henry came to show Hamil to his room.

CHAPTER X

A POSTPONED MARRIAGE PROMISE

WHEN Hamil went down to dinner he found the others already assembled. The Englishman and the Jew, both of whom had come that morning, were there, and of course Miss Winrose. It seemed that Bessie's friend and his chum were due to arrive the next day. Carmen delayed the general sitting-down till she had presented Hamil to the other two gentlemen.

While unfolding his napkin Hamil got a more informing look at the two strangers, and immediately found that the mental picture he had allowed his imagination to sketch needed touching up. He had conceived of Quesencourt as large, red and "beefy," with fair hair and little closely-trimmed whiskers. This was rather conventional, certainly, and had to be considerably modified, for the real

Englishman, though tall, was lean, large-boned, smoothly-shaven, and so deeply tanned that any natural ruddiness of skin was completely painted out. His eyes and hair were medium brown, and he had dazzling white teeth. As his features were pretty regular, he rounded out more than average good looks, and in fact, many would have called him handsome. He wore his hair pompadour, but short, and the effect was a little bristly. He was dressed in unbleached linen, with a gray shirt and a blue necktie, and a very long, very fine-linked watch-chain was wound twice around his neck. He appeared to be about Hamil's age, or somewhat short of thirty.

The Jew, who Hamil had sketched in advance as short and stubby in figure, was rather tall, and rosily smooth and round. His hair was black and crinkly, and thin on top, and his full beard and mustache were fine and woolly, as if they were a first and only growth. His nose was fat, his forehead large, and his eyes were the mildest sort of black. His loose clothes were of fine brown cloth, and

his standing collar flared high about his short and fat neck. A small diamond shone in his white four-in-hand. His eyes winked often, and did not seem very strong, and he wore gold-bowed eyeglasses attached by a cord to a hook on his lapel. It was a guess that he was younger than he looked, but he could hardly have been under forty.

There was as little other formality as possible before the meal was in full swing, and Hamil saw at once that the Major and the girls had been in earnest when they proclaimed the freedom and social undress of Le Bijou. Everything was delightfully and restfully simple, each person could say and do as he pleased, and, the table at which they sat was round.

This last neat stroke was of some consequence to Hamil. He had felt that his position was a bit anomalous, for he was both a friend of the family, and at the same time a kind of gentleman servant to the head of it. He was not sure what the Englishman and the Jew might know of his strange claims on the

friendship of the family; whether they might regard it as a sort of professional claim, or how they would look upon it. As he mentally put it to himself—they might not regard him as "flesh, fish, or good red herring." Now, as he took in the meaning of the round table, and with it noted how all were made to conform to the equality implied by it, he felt that he had no need to concern himself. The matter had been taken out of his hands. The island, as compared with the world without, was like the Marly of the great Louis, as compared with his Versailles.

Finding his social feet thus firmly placed, Hamil was more at his ease, but still he was tactful enough to understand that he would do well to be modest, and not seem to be making any too much of the Arthurian privilege. In other words, he determined to keep in a great degree in the background, and as he had been placed between Bess and the Jew, at first it was easy to follow his plan, for Bess was trying to bring out the somewhat stolid Englishman, and getting him into talk with Miss

Winrose, and Baum was taking an open and almost child-like interest in his food, but after a few minutes these conditions changed. Miss Winrose and Quesencourt were at last brought to a little duet, and the Jew suddenly abated his assault on his plate, and slanted his face around to Hamil.

"This place provokes a great appetite, and a fellow does n't have to hide it. That is one of the freedoms. Why, maybe one could almost make a little noise in eating, like Samuel Johnson, and not be rebuked. Don't you think we are all fortunate to be here?"

There was something so simple and good-natured in the man's way that Hamil was drawn to him. His voice was rich, with a suggestion of slipping from English, but never quite doing it, yet with his native German always just under the surface. He was born in Berlin, as Hamil had already heard.

"I don't think there is a doubt that we are lucky in being here," Hamil answered him. "I am not so sure, though, about the Johnson

business. It might be a little risky to try it."

"Pushing one's liberty to license? True. We 'd better not try it. My friend the Major is not a man to offend; no. He has been trained to business, and business is very severe, and not to be fooled with. Do you know about it? Have you been trained to it?"

"Hardly; only a sprinkling, so to speak."

"Yes? So with me, too. I inherited a little fortune, and have made it work well for me, and take care of me. I am lazy. Oh, God, yes. So I am a non-commercial Jew, and not quite orthodox, at that. Sad to see such a degenerate. Will you not pass those pickles? I do not ask the servant because that is what I should do at home, and here we all seek a change, so they tell me—thank you."

Hamil was allowing himself to be amused. At least, it was a little relaxation from the strain he had been under.

"According to what you say," he remarked,

"you and the Major like each other because you are opposites."

"A good deal on that account. He gives me business advice when I have to bother with my investments, and that makes me admire him. It is great to have such a head. Dear me! And I can do nothing for him, which grieves me."

But here Bess, who had momentarily caught the talk, suddenly put in her word.

"Oh, that is n't true. Excuse me, Mr. Baum, but you are lying terribly. Mr. Dana, he is altogether too modest. He has gifts, and he knows how to use them. He has cheered papa through blue spells, and taken his attention, and he plays the harp when talk won't do, as David played to cheer Saul. The comparison is all the better that Mr. Baum's name is David. So there! Now I have helped to set things right. And Mr. Baum, after supper you must play to us, and prove what I have said."

"Here is the freedom I spoke of," the man said to Hamil. "She calls me a liar. *Ach,*

but all men are liars, and so she spoke the truth. Well, I will play and sing. After that you shall give us something on the guitar. There is no refusing, if I understand the rules of the island aright. Is not that so, Miss McAllister?"

He looked across at Carmen, who by this time was listening.

"Exactly true."

"Oh, well," said Bess, "I did n't intend to refuse."

"That will be fine!" Quesencourt, in his turn, put in.

"And you 'll give us 'The British Lion,' Quesencourt?" the Major took his turn, and compellingly asked.

"If it is enjoined. I am under the law, like all the rest."

Miss Winrose, being done for the time with Quesencourt, looked smilingly across at Hamil.

"And how about the knight errant? Some knight errants were also troubadours, I believe."

"Events are thickening, to use an original expression," Hamil smiled back, and answered. "We are all getting into it. Well, as this is a time and a place for frankness, I will say that I am willing to try something. It is not to be singing, though; it shall be at the piano. Major, how is it with you?"

"I don't know a thing about music, though I like it. I 'll be audience. Miss Winrose, you play or sing, or both?"

"I don't sing, but as this is a truth club I will own that I play the piano a little."

"Miss McAllister, you can do all kinds of things to a piano," said Quesencourt, thus disposing of the last survivor—"Excellent! We are all settled."

They had grown enthusiastic about it. Something more was said, and the conversation split up again, each talking to one or two, and not to all the rest. In the midst of this Carmen singled out Hamil. They were for the moment virtually by themselves.

"You *are* musical, then?" she said a little curiously. "Under the circumstances it is a

discovery. Somehow I had a notion that you were of a different temperament—say, mathematical, or mechanical, or any way, decidedly practical."

"Perhaps I am some of those as well," he answered, smiling. "But you see," he went on, with a little more earnestness, but yet with seeming lightness, "you don't know much about me. To compare small things with great, I have thus far been like the moon, which always keeps one side away from us."

"I shall be interested," she said with unhesitating point, "to see what is on the other side."

Somebody else struck in just here, and their banter abruptly ended.

Music still held the place of honor in the general talk, and even the Major had something to say about it, though he wanted it understood that he knew much more about checkers. The end of the supper finally broke up the subject, and scattered them, though it was agreed that they were to come together again half an hour later. "The concert," the Major explained, "will be held in

the music room, which is the other side of the hall, where the piano is. Incidentally, there 's a good floor for dancing, but I don't suppose you 'll right away get down to that. However, if you should, then the audience—meaning me—will raise no objections."

Hamil thought he would fill in the half hour by a stroll out of doors. They were all in the "office" at the time, and he crossed over to a clothes-hook after his cap. Carmen was standing a few steps away, by one of the windows, trying to peer out. Just then Quesencourt, his own cap in his hand, came along.

"Can't see much, can you?" he asked her. She turned to him, and said that she was n't trying very hard. "I dare say you could make out more at close range," he went on. "Would you mind taking a turn of the piazza with me? It would be a sort of constitutional."

She shook her head.

"It 's a little dark, and not exactly cheerful. I think I 'd rather not."

"More of us will make it cheerful," spoke

up Bess. "Come, Marcella, join me for a spin. The piazza goes clear around, so we can do quite a circumnavigating act."

"Wait till I get a wrap and I 'll go," Miss Winrose answered.

"All right. Don't you want to go now, sis, dear?"

"Well, perhaps so."

As soon as the girls were ready the four passed outside, Hamil, who had taken the notion to linger, leisurely following. But he immediately left the piazza, and struck off among the surrounding walks and paths.

He was calling himself a hard name as he started, and he ended with: "What difference does it make to me?" He had picked up a stick, and to show how little difference the something did make to him, he doubled the stick in his hands, and broke it. He walked on glumly and fast for the next ten minutes, after which he gradually grew steadier, and finally turned back, going up one of the walks to the nearest steps of the piazza. It chanced that the place was at the end farthest from the

front, where some vines curtained a piece of lattice-work. He came into the obscurity of these at a step, and must have been hidden on the instant from the two persons who were at the opposite corner. They were sufficiently out in the light so that he could tell who they were, though at the moment they were but half faced around. The tall figure was Quesencourt, and the one nearly in white was Carmen. Just now, at least, they were alone, for Bess and Miss Winrose were not in sight.

Before he thought, Hamil pulled up short. As yet he had made very little noise, and there were other sounds—the rustling of the leaves under the fitful stir of wind, the deep subtone of the surf and small noises from within the house to help cover it. She was speaking, and her voice had a carrying quality that made it heard beyond what would have been guessed as she said:

"No, I still think as I did before. I can't decide. I am not ready. How do I know that the old trouble won't return? I must feel sure of that before I even consider an an-

swer. I like you very much, Mr. Quesencourt, and I have sufficient sentiment to fancy the English home you have pictured to me, but yet it is out of the question for me to encourage you further than that. You had better give me up. It is a long chase, you see, and I am like a will-o'-the-wisp. There are other girls who—"

"I don't want them!" he impatiently and almost savagely broke in. "I will wait for you, wait for you—be it one year or twenty."

Hamil could see that she was moved. Her head drooped a little, and for the moment she did not answer. Quesencourt pulled off his cap, and turned it inside out, and back again. He seemed to be afraid of her, or confused and shaken by the upstir of his thoughts. But here she raised her head again.

"If you really wish it I will do this, ask me again in a month, before we leave the island, and I will give you a final answer. That will be a little longer experiment to see whether my trouble comes back. You are as good and constant as you can be, and I—I

almost love you. Any woman should be proud to be loved by a man like you and I am. Now we must go back. Does this promise satisfy you? It is the best I can do, and—"

"Oh, yes, yes," he broke in again, "it does satisfy me; I mean it encourages me, and gives me new hope. God bless you, dear one! You have a kind heart, even if you do find it so hard to let me into it. You 'll let me kiss your hand, won't you? It will help to make what you have said seem real."

She hesitated, but only for an instant. Hamil saw her hand go out, and still more distinctly saw Quesencourt bend over it. Then, after a lingering moment, he straightened up again, and they began to move away. They went in the opposite direction, or so as to take them to the front of the house by the westerly side. Hamil started, and once more shook himself together. He likewise, and at a pace faster than theirs, made for the front door.

CHAPTER XI

A CONCORD OF SWEET SOUNDS

ALL came together in the music room a few minutes later, Baum with his harp, and Bess with her guitar. Carmen opened the piano, and Miss Winrose put some sheet music modestly on an obscure chair.

The Major remarked that he was somewhat oppressed by his rôle of audience, but that he would do the best he could to fill it, and settled himself in a willow reclining chair. He was near a corner, where Hamil sat, and soon began to talk to the young man, pretty quickly bringing him out of what appeared to be a mood, and this was done before the others were giving them any particular attention.

"The harp is more ancient and more honorable than the guitar or the piano," Carmen said to Baum, "and so do you begin."

"But the most ancient and honorable things always come last," he objected, "and therefore I should not be asked to begin. The ancient business also includes myself personally, so that I properly stay back with my instrument. Say no more. Lead off yourself, and do so with that jingly thing from Kjerulf, unless you have thought of something better. It has danced its way through my head a hundred times since last I heard you play it."

"Venerable age has its claims on us," Carmen politely acknowledged, "and so I shall comply."

She went to the piano, and played a queer, swaying, tiptoe thing, that was one of the Norwegian composer's folklore bits. It was the music of a song, but defined itself strangely well in the notes alone, though to be sure, it needed a sympathetic interpreter, which beyond question Carmen was.

Of course there must be more, and she gave them rather a sober excerpt from one of Weber's difficult concert pieces.

In the midst of the respectful applause she rose.

"I don't feel spontaneous tonight, and I shan't play any more. I want to hear other people's music. Yes, I am one of the barbarians of the island, and so it 's all right for me to declare my wants. Now, Mr. Baum, you and the harp."

"Well," he said, coming forward and standing by the instrument, "then here you have us. But *ach,* is n't it a little come-down from a piano to a jew's-harp? Don't say a word. I was thinking that out all the time I was in my room."

He sat down, while they applauded the pun, and tinkled his fingers over the strings. His crinkly black locks had strayed down on his forehead, and with his soft, woolly beard, his broad nose, and his twinkling foreign eyes, he made up a jolly and almost laughable sort of mountebank. Carmen and Bess, however, as Hamil chanced to notice, showed a good deal more interest and expectation than

amusement, and even the Major had straightened up alertly in his chair.

Instead of beginning at once, Baum took a sheet of music from a roll, and opened it with an important air.

"I am going to play this when you encore me, but not now. It will go off better then. Watch and see. But first, I am going to read one of the verses. I want it to be soaking into your minds against I come to it in the song. And notice, please, how swingy-swangy it is. It gallops its way right across the harp. The song, by the way, is about a harp. Now listen."

His look changed. All the fun went out of it, and all seriousness came into it. In a voice low and distinct, and oddly unlike his usual one, he read:

Touch the strings, sweep the strings,
Smite if thou wilt.
It shall give thee back lovely things,
Lusty and joyous things,
Battle and tempest things,
Love or a lilt.

"Sweet!" heartily cried Miss Winrose. "We shall know what to expect now when we get the song."

Carmen and Bess said praiseful things also. But Hamil, at first with a surprised look, and then with a faintly confused one, said nothing, and sat up almost straight in his place. As it happened, the others were not just then noticing him.

"The composer of the words and music," said Baum, "is a young New Yorker whom I met in Vienna. We were introduced in a crowd, and no doubt he immediately forgot me; but I have not forgotten him. That is to say, I might not know him off-hand, if I was n't expecting to see him, but as soon as I had time to get him clear in my mind he would come back. He is the kind that is n't easily forgotten. His name is John Hamil."

But there was no dramatic flourish in this windup, and the speaker himself did not so much as glance towards Hamil.

"Why," broke out Bess in surprise, "he

wrote the little song I was going to sing. It is written—at least I guess it is—in fourteenth century English—a sort of Chaucer style. The name of it is 'Sing Cuccu.' It is queer, is n't it, that we should both happen to light on this one man's compositions? He does n't seem to be very famous, either. Still, truth is stranger than fiction, you know."

"Well, there does seem to be a good deal of Hamil with us just at present," the Jew remarked. "No harm, that I can see, as things stand. Only, at some future time, we might wish to overhaul him a little, and ask him why he gives us so much of himself. It is almost a mystery, don't you see. But there are good mysteries as well as suspicious ones in the world; for my part, I am not ready to be suspicious."

Naturally, there was but one person in the room who got more than a rather puzzling generality out of all this. Hamil looked squarely towards Baum now, but the Jew was not looking at him.

Baum was at the moment making a sort of

dumb show of playing, his face drooped a bit. All at once his fingers met the strings, and there stole out a low, tenderly sweet prelude. Then he raised his head, his soft brown eyes lighted, a great throb came from the harp, the sound died again, and his voice, almost throbbing itself, and beginning low, but rising in volume like a tide, alone went on. It was a splendid and compelling voice, and it was filled from register to register with such power that none who listened could find room for any sort of doubt or apprehension. There were no hollow spots. The voice was alone but for an instant. As it swelled to its heights, the harpstrings tinkled, they took on volume, voice and instrument going forward together with inspiring harmony.

To be more precise it was a sort of chant, but in words that not one of the listeners understood. There was something oriental about it, for a guess, and the pitch was higher than that of most Western chants. Even so it was all the better for his wide-ranging, but still well-defined tenor voice.

There was hardly a noticeable *finale,* but instead the weight and rush died down, and went into a soft postlude. Then it all abruptly ended.

There were long breaths, and little murmurs of something like bewildered admiration, in the midst of which Baum waved his hand and said:

"Perhaps you will want to know what it is. Well, I have n't named it. When I have I will let you know. But the theme in the rough is from an old Hebrew chant. I have tacked on a few barbarisms."

They said some things in answer, the feeling being too deep for ready and flowery words. Hamil had moved his chair farther out into the room. He tacked on to what the others had said:

"Mr. Baum, I believe now that you *are* lazy, as you say, for otherwise you would be on the stage. You have the most glorious tenor voice I ever heard."

"Thank you. That makes my voice a lit-

tle proud, but does n't affect me. I did n't make the voice."

"And now give us the harp-song," cried Bessie eagerly. "I have kept in mind what you said. I have let the words 'soak in.' "

"Very well. The title of the song is 'The Consoler.' "

Like the other, it was in a way a chant. He made the words very plain, and both sang and played low.

It ran in this way:

Keep the harp by thee, and touch it when
  The shadows creep too near.
Prefer the soft strings to the cheer of men;
It shall bring back the angel of peace again—
  Let it talk from God to thy fear.

Touch the strings, sweep the strings;
    Smite if thou wilt.
It shall give thee back lovely things,
  Lusty and joyous things,
  Battle and tempest things,
    Love or a lilt.

The magic the music is,
  White art of God.

It speaks to your soul from His,
Flowers your world from His;
Sun on your sod.

They could keep track of this better than the other, and were not bewildered. So, when he had ended, they applauded heartily. They wanted more, but he shook his head.

"Two rounds apiece is enough. It is late. Miss Bessie, let's have your 'Cuccu.' Too bad Mr. Hamil is n't here, for he is missing a good deal of appreciation."

Hamil began to grow a shade irritated. There was no need of rubbing the discovery in, so to speak. However, Baum carried a look that was hard to fathom; it was impossible to determine whether any definite purpose lay behind it; and besides, Hamil fully expected to have a talk with him. He meant to seek the opportunity if Baum should fail to offer one.

Bessie first passed the music around. "You must read it so as to let the quaintness soak in. I thank you for 'soak in,' Mr. Baum. It's very useful."

"All right. But you might have put it with better effect. Why did you not say: 'Oh, Jew, I thank thee for that word'? Never miss a chance like that."

"Everybody does n't have your wit, and so see the chance," she answered.

Meanwhile the sheets were going the rounds. Hamil glanced at them with the rest. Miss Winrose met his eye as he passed them along, and slightly and meaningly smiled. He could not well help smiling back, though in reality he was hardly in the mood for it. Things in general were not going to his mind.

The sheets soon came back to Bessie. The words of the song were these:

The fowlës of the ayre are come,
The windës blow the warmth of spring.
Fetch the pipe and tabor too;
Raise the tune, and sing cuccu.

The stranger from a far countree
Shall turn hym round, and hum the song;
Monks shall laugh as others do;
Slip their cowls, and sing cuccu.

With tossëd caps the swains will troop,
The mayds fling garlands in the air;
Lords in mayl and knaves in blue—
Hear them laugh, and sing cuccu.

My ladye in the castle gate
With heartë touched, now smileth sweet.
Doth she live her youth anew,
As they sing cuccu, cuccu?

It is well that thus they sing —
Sing cuccu, cuccu—
In the joyeuse spring.

"The meter is peculiar," Bessie observed, as she took her guitar. "I suppose you all noticed it."

"I can't say that I did," courageously spoke up Miss Winrose.

"The last lines in each verse are snubbed," said Baum. "The first ones jog, and the last ones break into a canter. I suppose that is what you mean. But I should say that this was a good trick to work up an effect."

"You see everything and know everything!" said Bess admiringly. "Yes, that is what I meant. The effect is produced by be-

ginning the verses with eight-syllable lines, and ending them with seven."

She tuned a string or two, and began to sing.

Her voice fully bore out the moderate praise that her sister had once given it, for it was a very fair contralto. Besides, she sang vivaciously, and her virile youth, and brilliant prettiness wonderfully helped. She showed the effects of careful training also. The air itself was rather fetching, and so, in all, the thing went off, as the stock phrase is, successfully.

The encore song was a ballad, and "tuny," as Carmen was wont to say, but it fared as well as the other.

Miss Winrose was made next on the cards, and played successively, two studies from Chopin. As her physical range of the instrument was rather small, and as her hands were slight, she wisely favored a composer who himself had serious physical limitations, and who therefore sometimes composed to suit his range. But on the other hand, he was beau-

tifully delicate, and at times moving, and this she showed that she understood. It was evident that she knew what painstaking work meant, and had not shirked.

The Major nominated the Englishman for the next place, and he accordingly became Miss Winrose's successor.

He knew little about music, and in fact played by ear, but he dashed off "The British Lion," and "Tim Curley" in a hearty English way, and in a voice that had strength, if it lacked somewhat of delicacy and sweetness. He was particularly able when he came out with—to give his own pronunciation—"The British leeon is a noble beast," and ended with the warning, "but beware how you tread on his tail."

Lastly, it was Hamil's turn. As he passed Carmen he caught her expression, and again saw that she seemed in a way curious and almost puzzled. He guessed at once that she was having hard work to make him seem otherwise than the Jack Beauchamp of her Edith days, and so non-musical. But if he was Jack

Beauchamp in that (so the odd thought now ran through his mind) he perhaps seemed Jack Beauchamp in nearly everything else. In other words, he was still to her in effect a fictitious person, and one of her own imagining. It was solely by an effort, and strictly as an intellectual process, that she had been able to accept his word that he had some ways and qualities that were different from her artificially constructed Jack. All this was at least interesting, and he meant to consider it more carefully when there was time. Just now it went no further than to move him to the notion of making war on Beauchamp, and overthrowing him utterly.

This could be done in no more effectual way than in emphasising Beauchamp's rival as a musical person, and therefore he determined to take pains now, and make his performance noteworthy, which had not been his idea at first.

He began with a fugue from Handel, one that might tempt a careless player to an easy-going sameness, if not monotony, but which

of course was never meant by the great master to have any such treatment. He put life into it from the very start, and yet never took liberties, and thoughout was chaste, and even delicate. He supposed that only Carmen, and perhaps the Jew, would understand and appreciate such high-class work, but in reality he was playing solely for her.

When he had finished the last note there was general applause, but hers was the promptest and heartiest.

"Fine!" she cried, "fine! I have heard strong players do that piece, but never so well. You must have felt it all through, and then have given generous time to the practice."

"Well, perhaps I was not lazy about it. But then I am strong, so practice does not count as a bugbear."

They called for the second piece—the second round, as Baum had called it—and this time he gave them a Beethoven sonata, a more difficult piece than the first. It was in B Flat, and the time was comparatively fast, with strong declarations of chords, and no chance

for tricks of resting, or dodging. Hamil, as before, did not shirk. Instead, he seemed to court the difficulties, and enjoy them, and he did not falter nor make a noticeable error.

This time it was Baum that got in the first word.

"I am not much more than a theorist at the piano," he said, "but I know enough to be sure that you are an able player. You are so robust that you seem to frighten the keys into obeying you; yet at the same time you never take advantage of them and treat them with any suspicion of brutality."

"That is just it," indorsed Carmen. "You are strong, and at the same time delicate. Oh, and you interpret like a seer! I am familiar with that sonata, for my old teacher doted on it as specially choice."

"I agree with them to the best of my poor knowledge," Miss Winrose said. "I have not heard such playing before in years."

Hamil laughed, and got up.

"I have a sweet tooth, so I can stand a reasonable amount of taffy."

The others were rising now, the concert being over. In the slight confusion Carmen came up to Hamil.

Speaking low:

"You are bothering me more and more, but I forgive you. I should be willing to revise all my ideas of you if I could hear lots more of that music."

His eyes glowed a little with satisfaction, and he smiled.

"That *is* a compliment, and I thank you for it. Nothing would please me better than to play for you, and to have you play for me. Why, if I stood behind you, and you should start a few Hungarian touches it would almost bring back the steamer. I know this is taboo, but I submit that you broke over first. You resurrected Beauchamp, and I Edith. Well, it was only her wraith." He saw that Miss Winrose and Bess were now giving some heed to them, and he perfunctorily finished: "I am sure it has been a pleasant evening for all of us."

"You must sing for us next time, and that

will make it more enjoyable still," Carmen took the hint and answered.

The others also invaded the little circle, and nothing was left but formalities and good-nights.

"I gave my friend Beauchamp a good dig that time," Hamil muttered to himself.

Considering that he felt towards Carmen as he did, and that she was—as he insisted to himself—of so little importance to him, his success seemed to give him a surprising amount of satisfaction.

CHAPTER XII

ONE OF EVE'S DAUGHTERS

LATE hours on the island would be comparatively early ones in the city, and so the hands of the clock had not far advanced when Hamil got to bed. He slept a generous number of hours, and then found that he was early for breakfast, so he set out for a little stroll.

As he had seen nothing at all of the northerly part of the island, he headed in that direction, and immediately came upon a path that proved to lead directly there. The way was skirted by clumps of evergreens and a few oaks, maples and birches, and was made more picturesque by great mossy boulders, and bold rock-faces, with ridges of granitic buttresses. For the greater part the sea was shut off, and it seemed almost like a bit stolen out of the country, instead of a mere little

strip of an ocean-battered rock. To help the illusion, some sparrows chippered down out of the trees, and picked about, and fought noisy pettish duels, after the manner of their kind.

But pretty soon he mounted a small rise, and then what there was of the illusion vanished. The ground became suddenly open, and on every hand was the sea.

It was not more than an ordinary base-ball throw to the end of the island itself, and here was a knob of rock, with something of a cliff below. In place of the wood-notes, and the birds, the sea broke with a leisurely but inexorable wash on the iron-hued rocks. In some of the tiny caverns worn by the thousands of centuries the floods now and then became penned, and broke free only after a boiling turmoil, and a wild fling of frantic white spume.

To the right was the seaboard itself, with nothing but the water rim for a boundary, and towards this he turned.

There was another low cliff here, also, and

the top ran out in a rounding table, almost flat, and bare of everything except granite and granite dust. Yet where the table rose to some higher rock, and a spur of stunted evergreens, was a barkless dead tree, its trunk whitened and polished by the weather till it looked almost like some gigantic, fossil bone. Hamil walked along to it, and sat down.

The wind was not strong, and it came nearly off the land, yet it had something of a sweep here, and made the trees on the slope behind him faintly rustle, and this joined with the unceasing wash and seething on the narrow strip of shingle below. Seaward the sun was high enough to bring a dazzle off the water, and the sky had deepened in its blue till out a little the sea had turned blue also, but close in to the rocks the shoal places paled the backs even of the biggest crests to green.

There was little at first-hand except nature, for there was not a craft of any sort in the immediate offing, and it was only on the sea-line itself that a white, leaning pillar stood for a sail.

He took off his cap, that the breeze might the better play through his hair—and perhaps too, out of the unconscious feeling of coming a bit nearer to nature, an inward stir of the ancient, barbaric man, and gradually forgetting himself, slipped into a day dream.

At last something broke in upon the spell, and he found that it was a light swishing noise among the trees at his back. He turned, and faced Miss Winrose. She stood at the top of an outcropping ledge, with a branch that had barred her out still in her hand.

He rose, and turned wholly about, and she looked down and laughed.

"Good morning. I have been exploring. I did n't know where I was coming out, but meant it should be somewhere by the sea. I did n't expect to find a fellow explorer, though."

"Oh, well," he said, "now that you have found him, come down. Let me help you."

He took two steps up the rock, and she reached down her hands, getting a strong steadying that took her to the level below.

He followed her, and pointed to the log.

"See how polite the ages are to strangers—rustic bench at just the right place. Won't you share it with me?"

"Oh, thank you. I don't mind if I do. I suppose it still lacks a few minutes of breakfast time. So you are smart this morning, the same as myself? But it 's fine and inspiring to get up heroically and do it. Don't you think so?"

"Not to talk high, it really is n't much of a sacrifice for me. You see, I am so used to it that it 's easy."

"Why, I suppose that does make a difference. But after all, we are not the only smart ones. Miss McAllister and Mr. Quesencourt are out also. I saw them strolling towards the boat landing."

"Oh, you did?" His look very slightly changed.

"Yes. But that is n't altogether surprising, is it? I mean that they should be strolling together? I suppose that it was pretty nearly a matter of course."

"Is it?" he said laconically. "I did n't know."

"You did n't?" She seemed surprised. "I supposed that of course you must know. You were with the family a part of the time when they were abroad?"

"Yes, for a while."

"And though Mr. Quesencourt was n't with them, yet I should suppose that his name must frequently have been mentioned. In connection with it, they naturally—but this seems too much like gossip. I did n't mean it for that."

"No harm done, that I can see."

"Well, I am glad to hear you say so. As for what I have said, I want to explain that I got a part of my information from Bess—it came out in the way of chat—and have observed other things myself. A woman has quick perception for all such news, Mr. Dana."

"I know it," he said, relaxing a little. "Yes, if I am an old bachelor I have picked up that much."

"It does you credit. But Mr. Dana—?"

"Yes?"

"You yourself have become a puzzle to me. I suppose it 's bold, and all that, but I should terribly like to solve you. In the first place, you are concealing your real name, and that is strange, and then—and some other things. I thought that you must take a particular interest in Carmen, but by your manner you do not, but are rather indifferent to her. Then, if you are not here from friendship, nor for any money reason, and as you continue to hide your identity from the family—"

"Then what in the dickens am I here for? Excuse me, but that is what you mean. I partly promised to explain it, and if I had n't you have, I believe, a right to ask. I might be up to some jinks or other, and you, as a friend of the family, want to know about it. Well, Miss Winrose, it is all very simple. You of course understand the general circumstances—how I came to know these people?"

"Yes, Bess has told me that."

"Very well, then. Of course I started out

of pity, and I am waiting now to make sure my job is finished. But I was to explain about my disguising my name. I thought it would be less embarrassing to them if I appeared to take the job for money. If they thought I was above money considerations they would be more reluctant to call on me. You see, they had no sort of claim on me, a stranger."

"Oh, and was that it? I might have guessed, too, but I was stupid. Why, that was fine of you! You are the very essence of a gentleman, Mr. Hamil!"

"Easy!" he laughed. "Put it on a little thinner, please."

"I shan't. It ought to be thicker."

She shook her head at him, and looked at him with defiant admiration. Her blue eyes sparkled.

His color faintly rose. She was very attractive just at that moment, and he was both lonesome, and a mere flesh-and-blood man. This in spite of the lofty knight-errantcy with which she had invested him. But to have

feelings is not always to be a fool. He merely nodded, and feigned to see the uselessness of opposing her.

"I have silenced your guns," she said. "Very well. Now I will go on again. I want to ask about something else. Do you see any signs of Carmen's trouble coming back?"

He quickly sobered.

"No. But then, I don't know much about it. You must remember that so far I have seen but one change in her; she was Edith, and is now herself."

"That's true. Oh, but it would be too cruel to think that she would relapse. I am going to have it that she will stay herself, and ultimately marry Mr. Quesencourt. As short a time as I have known the two I have figured it all out; it is my romance. Why not have a little one for other people, if you have none for yourself?" She tossed her head, and laughed. But the laugh was a bit nipped and short, and her pretty mouth took on the faintest turn of bitterness.

"If people prefer to do things vicariously of course they can," he answered seriously. "It must certainly be that way with you and beautifully done."

"Thanks for the compliment. Excellent taste on my part to introduce myself—to drag myself in— don't you think so? I don't know what made me. I should sneer if I saw some other girl do it. But there is that about you which somehow makes one frank, and brings things out. To use newspaper English, you inspire confidence. Now don't deny that, because it is surely so. Just see how quickly these people took you in, and trusted you. It is a pleasant gift, Mr. Hamil, even if it is a shade dangerous."

Her lips took on a sweeter turn, and her voice fell lower. Her look, though it still met his, was hardly so steady.

"If I listened to you very long I should swell up like a puff-ball," he shook his head, and laughed. Yet his eyes had lighted again, and a fresh, swift glance focussed her face and petite figure. Not even the little slender

foot, russet-shod, and peeping boot-high from the short skirt, was missed.

"But it is quite true," she insisted. "I say again—just see how all these people—hard-headed old father and the rest—took you in, and trusted you."

"Oh, now, perhaps I took them in," he laughed. "The truth is, the whole thing was a business of extremity. They had to do something."

"We shall never agree about that," she insisted, and she moved a little in her place. Now she looked out to sea. She seemed soberer, and more thoughtful. "I want to say something about last night," she went on after a pause. "Your playing was splendid. It is another gift added to all the rest. And you are a poet, too, and so have imagination. That was more than I had guessed. I had supposed you were built on practical lines. But, Mr. Hamil, you have made good use of your wealth; you have made it serve your intellect instead of your body. You have been master, and not slave. Well, and that prevents

me from envying you the wealth," she smilingly went on. "As a rule, I do envy rich people. I crave money—lots of it. I am sick of scrimping, and pinching. I have to do that, or I should come out short. And dear me, how I want to take a trip abroad! Oh, heavens," she broke off, "here I am taking you into my confidence again! Forgive me. The next thing I shall hate you because you are such a magnet. You draw out my secrets as the loadstone mountain drew the nails out of Sinbad's ship!"

"My dear lady, if that is so I am base enough to be glad of it," he said with emphasis. "Tell me some more. I am restless and lonesome, and shall thank God if I can be of a little use. But you speak about money, and a trip abroad. If—if—hang it, I don't know how to say it, but if only you—if you would let me—why it would be a positive favor to me—"

"Oh, stop! stop! No, I am not offended. How could I be? I have only myself to blame. No, you noble, knightly man, I

can't go so far as that, but I thank you all the same, and shall never forget it. And I am very, very sorry that you are lonesome. To tell the truth, I am a bit so myself, and so I know how to sympathize with you. While we are here if my society can in any way help you it is at your service. That is, to an extent that would not subject us to misunderstanding and remark. If Bess's college man comes she might not notice, and her sister and Mr. Quesencourt are doubtless so bound up in each other that they would be blind, but 'there are others.' You understand?"

"Yes, certainly. Thank you—thank you very much. I shall wish to take advantage of that."

But somehow this sounded a little hollow, and as she brought up Carmen and Quesencourt again, a shade of soberness passed over his face.

She was looking at him with more penetration than he could have guessed. She bit her lip, and if he had been watching her, as she was certainly watching him, he would have

detected a slight drawing together of the delicately fine eyebrows. However, the unimpaired artless face was back the next instant, and she pleasantly said:

"Then we two orphans have a bit of comforting understanding I am grateful for my part of it."

"And so am I. Of course I am." He tried hard to be quite himself, but the little subtle spell was broken. She smiled, and rose.

"I think I will be strolling back. I won't go through the woods, this time, as I have lost my adventurous spirit. I shall of course see you shortly at King Arthur's Round Table?"

"Yes, indeed. Count on that."

"Well, good-by till then." She made a pretty gesture, and passed around the other end of the log. He saluted by touching his uncovered foretop, and she sauntered away to the path along the rocks.

He turned rather heavily back, and absently sat down again. On her part, as she

struck into the path, she both frowned and smiled.

"After all," she said softly to herself, "it is a beginning."

Left to himself for a few minutes, Hamil slowly brightened. He had gone over her talk about Carmen and Quesencourt, and he felt sure that she was wrong.

He now looked at his watch, and turned homeward. He had come among the trees, and was in the little summer valley, when a man rounded a turn of the path. He wore a wide-brimmed straw hat, and a suit of almost dazzling white duck. It was Mr. Baum.

Hamil stopped, and waited for him. It would be a good time to ask a few pressing questions.

CHAPTER XIII

DAVID BAUM

"OH, how smart!" Baum called out as he came up. "I am just starting for exercise, while you are all in fettle, and are coming back. But then, I was n't meaning to go far. In fact, breakfast is nearly ready."

"That last is good news," Hamil answered, "for I am pretty wolfish. But if you don't mind, I will turn about and go with you a little way. There is something I should like to speak about."

"By all means come along. I can guess what it is you want to say, and I am entirely ready to hear it."

Hamil wheeled, and they caught step.

"My cigar has gone out," Baum said, taking a fresh one from a case. "If you don't mind I 'll smoke and listen."

"You won't have to listen very long, for it 's a brief and simple matter."

"You 'll have a cigar?"

"Thank you, no; I don't smoke."

"Too bad. It 's a beautiful habit. Just a moment."

He started his cigar, and threw away the match.

"Now I am receptive."

"I 'll come straight to the point," Hamil said. "I am ready to tell you why I am here under a false name. It looks suspicious that I should be, and if I can't give a good reason you will be justified in showing me up. But before I go on, do you know the whole story of Miss McAllister's trouble, and how I came to be mixed up with the family?"

"Yes, or the substance of it. The Major told me. He feels very grateful to you. And say, you managed a fearfully difficult situation in grand style. There 's no doubt about it."

"Thank you. That makes it easier to go on and explain."

"It was because of my good opinion that I

believed you must have a satisfactory reason for hiding your identity."

"Well, then, it is a simple matter to tell the rest. It came to me that I could make the family's situation a little less embarrassing by pretending to be poor. They could hire me, as they would any other nurse, or attendant, and feel as if they were not asking too much. It would then seem more like a family matter, too, with me, so to speak, inside the lines. At least, that was my thought at the time, and without much reflection I went ahead. I still see no harm in the arrangement, nor that it has n't worked well. However, I have no intention of keeping it up, and if Miss McAllister continues to be all right I shall go away, and later explain."

"That 's all good," said the Jew with emphasis. "Yes, considerate of you. I shan't butt in. Be sure of that."

"Thank you once more. Naturally, I want to work this out myself, and in my own way."

"Well, as they say on the stage, the secret is safe with me."

"There is only one other here that knows it," Hamil then explained; "that is Miss Winrose. By a stupid mistake I gave myself away to her, but like you, she will keep dark."

"A woman and a secret?" said the Jew raising his eyebrows. "Don't you think they will have to part company?"

"I hope not right away. No, I think that Miss Winrose is safe. I am willing to trust her."

"Oh, very well," Baum said with a shrug; "you may be right."

"She is a sort of innocent little person," Hamil further commented, "but yet she appears to have a good deal of sense."

"I think," said the Jew reflectively, "that she has lots of it. I have noticed her somewhat. But she is more sophisticated than she looks," he went on, "or else I am infernally mistaken. Believe me, brother, she would not be above a little side-corner plot."

"Oh, no," protested Hamil; "not that. I have thought of her more as a bright sort of artless person."

"You had better revise your judgment and find a different word," the Jew counseled dryly. "I am non-commercial, but I know something about human nature. Particularly, I understand women."

"On theory, or actual knowledge?" asked Hamil skeptically. "You have been in love, perhaps?"

"No; only touched with enough of it to make me dread it," returned the Jew philosophically. "And it is just because I view it so nearly from the outside, that I judge so clearly," he added. "When you want to hang a picture straight you don't stay close to the wall; you stand off."

"That sounds well," Hamil smilingly admitted, "but nevertheless, I am not convinced. She has been frank with me and I don't believe she is designing."

"Perhaps not," said Baum, knocking the ashes from his cigar. "But something may yet come up to show."

Hamil nodded, though incredulously.

Not much more was said till it was time to

turn back. Baum then, after what appeared to be a moment of hesitation, remarked:

"This whole business about Miss McAllister is strange. She is strange on her own account, and she has made strange and peculiar things happen. Just see how it comes about that you are here. Next, there may be another presto change, and then you take up your queer and unheard of part again! What will Mr. Quesencourt say to that—to see the woman he expects to marry fly to another man? And say, it is lucky that you are not in love with the double, for then it would be tough on you to see her with Quesencourt. Why, *himmel!* it would be a bit tragic! But doubtless I am stirring up my non-commercial imagination for nothing. There can't be anything in the real situation to warrant so much concern."

What the Jew really meant, and what he secretly suspected, of course Hamil did not know. All at once an impulse came upon him, and he acted on it.

"Baum," he said abruptly, "it is no dream;

I am in love with the shadow of this woman, as Quesencourt is in love with the substance, and God only knows who will win. I am going to stay here, or go elsewhere with the family, till I find out. Now you are wise to the whole thing. I expect you to keep it to yourself, and certainly there is no honorable reason why you should n't. I shall be honorable, just as I have been hitherto."

Baum took out his cigar, and let a long cloud that he had puffed blow away. Non-commercial Jew though he might be, he at least had the fine inscrutability of the race. Yet he was not slow with his answer to this confidence of his friend.

"You can trust me all right. Oh, dear, and it is the queerest secret that ever a fellow was asked to carry!

"But never mind about that, now," he pursued. "I want to ask something: How can you possibly expect to win? You can't properly nor legally marry an insane person, and that is what Miss McAllister's other condition seems to me to stamp her. And as her

proper self I don't understand that she cares for you. At least, she appears to think a good deal of Quesencourt."

Hamil's heavy brows came together.

"Baum, I don't know. That 's what 's the matter. Would to God I did know. Yet I shall stick it out, and something may happen. About her feelings towards Quesencourt, though, I think you are a little wrong. I have some reasons for believing that she does n't care so much for him as you suppose."

"I am not prepared to dispute that," Baum answered thoughtfully. "But even if so, it does n't much help your case. She evidently cares more for him than for you, and you have n't said that you cared for her at all. I mean, of course, as her proper self."

"That is partly true," said Hamil, but he spoke a little hesitatingly. "That is to say, I don't love her, and at first I was almost repelled at the sight of her. I can't make you understand that, probably, but in a way it was like seeing another woman dressed in my dead love's clothes and secretly rejoicing at her

death. But no, of course I can't make you understand that."

"But yet perhaps I do," said the Jew quickly. "I have some imagination, as I told you, and don't quite lack heart. But your antipathy has softened, as I understand you, and was mainly a first unreasoning impulse. The time has been short, but perhaps you have become a little used to her. Besides, your common sense has had time to work, and you have had to admit to yourself that the new person is not to blame for displacing the old."

"Yes," said Hamil, but he was not very quick to answer, "you are in a measure right. I *am* becoming a little used to it, and I am feeling more kindly towards her. But, Baum, I would give the world to see Edith looking at me out of those eyes, and feel just one lightest touch of her blessed hand!"

A slight tremor crept into his voice, and he turned his face for a moment another way.

The Jew's long, soft hand slipped over, and gently slapped his wrist.

"You are non-commercial, too, and you

have a heart. But never mind, be brave. As you say, something may happen."

Hamil felt out the comforting hand, and silently gripped it.

"Thank you. At least, it is a relief to have somebody to talk to. God knows that at times I have been almost bewildered."

He tried to pull himself together, and with one of his dogged efforts at last succeeded. Immediately after this they came in sight of the house.

CHAPTER XIV

AL FRESCO

AT breakfast there was a general consideration of the plans for the day, all being notified in advance that nobody need do anything that he or she did n't care to. "It is a state of freedom that borders on anarchy," announced Carmen.

But it soon appeared that a sail proposed by Quesencourt was going to have the popular vote, some trend towards socialism developing in this connection. It seemed that the Englishman, who was a yachtman of the old school, had hired a smart little sloop, and wanted to make up a party for a long sail. It was his idea to start at once, and be gone till dark.

After a few minutes it turned out that Bess would not be counted in, as her college friend and his chum were expected, and the Major

had some urgent matters about the place to see to. The others shipped for the cruise, namely: Carmen, Miss Winrose, Hamil and Baum. Quesencourt was to be skipper, and Hamil, who was something of a sailor, was to turn to before the mast. Baum knew nothing about a boat, but offered to be "gentleman supernumerary," which rather unusual berth he was allowed to fill.

The sloop proved to be a stiff little centerboard, some thirty-five or forty feet long, and rigged with a mainsail, jib and gaff-topsail. She was decked in except for a small standing room, and had wide washboards. There were sweeps laid along, so that, in a pinch, something could be done by rowing, but of course this would be of account in hardly any sort of weather except a calm. Hamil, who was cautious by nature, noticed all these things, understanding well that a small sailing craft, like a horse, is "a vain thing for safety," and that "everything may happen at sea."

The Englishman was not without prevision,

either, and he put aboard a spare lantern, a good supply of oilskins, an extra jug of water and a tin of crackers. People had been blown off shore before now, and had stood in sore need of just such things as these.

At last everybody and everything were aboard, and the skipper and Hamil made sail. There was a light and rather fitful westerly breeze, and the sheet was eased for a straight-away run. It was the plan to cruise as far as a certain Cucumber Island, which lay off to the southeast, and which Carmen said would be a cozy place for a picnic dinner. There was a fine little spring there, she told them, and trees enough for a shade.

The distance was around fifteen miles, and at the rate they were going, and as they had started late, they would make the island about noon. The breeze quickened after a little while, and became a bit squally; but nothing happened to bother them, or to interfere with their comfort, and the little sloop drove along till she had covered perhaps half of the distance. About this time a squall rather

sharper than the others struck them, and as the sloop bored into the seas, and leaped up again sweepingly, the mast made a great ado of snapping, and it seemed to Hamil that it buckled a trifle. As the squall subsided, he found that Quesencourt had noticed the same thing, for he said, with a careless air, speaking to Hamil:

"I want to go into the cuddy a moment. Will you please take the helm?"

He was gone fully five minutes, and when he came out again Hamil saw that he was unusually thoughtful. He said nothing, however, and Hamil would not disturb the general serenity by asking questions, and so the matter for the time ended. As it drew nearer to noon the wind slightly died down, and a few other squalls that they had were shorter and less spiteful than the earlier ones. Yet now Quesencourt told Hamil that it would be well to take a single reef, and when this had been done he steered more to windward, though this took them somewhat out of their course. Though the next squall was light,

Quesencourt slightly luffed, and so took some of the strain off the mast. Nobody but Hamil took any particular note of it, and again they kept on. Finally, a little later than they had figured, they made the island.

Baum at once came out with the emphatic declaration that he was barbarously hungry, and above all conventions of human origin, so that they would do well to start the dinner forthwith; otherwise, they might find everything in the baskets missing. To this the girls answered with zealous delight that they did n't blame him, and in fact, felt just so themselves, and upon that they commissioned the men to get stuff together for a fire.

Few things draw people together like a healthy out-doors appetite, and the accompanying rugged preparations for dinner. Everybody's tongue was loosed, time was no longer necessary to ripen an acquaintance, and before the coffee was off the fire they were like hotel piazza acquaintances of a month's standing. It may be added, though, that Carmen did much to bring this about, and did it of

set purpose. It was a part of the settled policy of Le Bijou.

But before all this was reached, and in fact, before they were settled as to the dinner place, Hamil had found a chance to talk aside with Quesencourt.

"Found a weak place in the mast, did n't you?" he asked.

"Yes, a bad check. It was where I did n't notice it at the time I first looked her over. There was some new paint on it, and she was lying quiet, with nothing to open up the place. Just a bit awkward, you see, for we might lose the mast. However, we must take chances on all these jolly goes, and I will be careful, and nurse her along. As we shall be on the wind all the way back I can keep her very close, and luff at every sharp touch. Mum 's the word, of course, or we shall spoil the fun of the girls and Mr. Baum."

"Sure, and that would be too bad."

Thus, with more heartiness than grammar, Hamil indorsed the cool and plucky Englishman, and they returned to the party.

When they came to form the dinner group Hamil sat down near Carmen. He would hardly have owned to himself that he did it of set purpose, yet if he had questioned himself he would have hesitated to deny it. The truth is, he found his present feelings towards her strangely confused and nebulous. Perhaps this was not strange, the circumstances considered; but yet it was the fact that he was more at sea about her now than he had ever been before. Nearly everything that had happened for the day had strengthened this. He had at times sat near her, and they had chatted freely and informally. She had shown no sort of shrinking from him—nothing whatever of embarrassment from the old matters. It was as if they had been blotted out. Such things women can do, to be sure, when men can't, and Hamil knew this; yet he was surprised to see how completely and dominatingly she managed it. Perhaps it was another wonder, too, that she carried it all off in the face of the avowed fact that she did not personally fancy him. This last humiliating

thought, it need hardly be said, was never quite out of his mind. It hurt—of course it did—hurt his pride, and it stung even more than when she had said it. They had been almost brutally frank with each other then, and he had taken the cut as if received in battle, scorning to think of the smart. Now, conditions were different; they had almost become friends.

Not unnaturally he went over again in his mind what he had said to her, and it helped his pride to think that he had not spared her. Though he had not gone quite so near the quick with his thrust, he had let her see plainly that she was no longer Edith, and that, in fact, she seemed almost like a cruel impostor. Yet take it all in all, he could well-nigh wish that the thing had not gone quite so far; that he had neither been jabbed nor had jabbed in return. It would have been better to have found everything out by degrees.

Before this proximity brought about by the meal was over, they had passed almost to a real *tête-à-tête*. The others did not seem to no-

tice them, and before Hamil was aware they were talking of things uncommon—at least, as subjects for picnic dinners. First, they harked back to music, and she told him of her upstirrings of rebellion against Wagner, and he in some things agreed with her, in others not. From this they slipped over to literature, and again it was a great figure that held the boards—Tolstoi. His dissatisfaction with Shakespeare was then comparatively new to the outside world, and the magazines still had him under fire on account of it. She was disposed to agree with him mildly on a few points, but Hamil was squarely against him in all. In his opinion Tolstoi had simply passed from artist to impracticable altruist, and then looked to find in Shakspeare the same kind of altruism. As he did not he condemned. But Shakespeare never professed to drop art for ethics, and Tolstoi himself did not till he was so old that his blood cooled, and Shakespeare wrote and died before coming to that age. This was Hamil's final argument.

But here the Jew "butted in," having caught Hamil's little peroration, and observed that he himself was a reformer, and that it was not good for the digestion to mix Shakespeare and Tolstoi with cold chicken.

The two did not go into this deep water again, and in fact had no more opportunity for side talks.

When it was over, and they were all finally on board again, Hamil found that Miss Winrose was this time his nearest neighbor. She had noticed him rather carefully while he was carrying on his dialogues with Carmen, but he had not in turn noticed her. At other times, however, he had chatted with her, and they had talked in the ordinary criss-crossing of the dinner persiflage. Now she seemed to have taken the seat near him by accident, though she smiled engagingly, and moved a bit nearer, as if she did not quite catch his words as he spoke to her.

Somehow or other he was very soon addressing himself more to her than to anybody else, though, in a light way, and not as he had

talked with Carmen. But for that matter, the etiquette of shipboard would not have allowed such a withdrawn affair. She was, nevertheless, very pleasant, and managed to a degree to interest him. She had a way of throwing out little suggestions, and making tentative remarks, and then waiting with expectant eyes, and deferential eagerness for his answers. It flattered him, and he could not help it. At the same time, he had a dim sense that it was just a trifle absurd, and perhaps not wholly sincere. He felt this sometimes when he began to answer, but by the time he was arranging his thoughts into words he felt that he was really an oracle that was rather worth while, and so ended with as much seriousness as the subject would permit.

Meanwhile, Carmen was sitting near Quesencourt, and though her manner was now rather subdued, and he seemed preoccupied, they talked occasionally, and particularly when Baum was having something to say to the other two, or was sentimentally

wrapped in a short sea study. Once Hamil —out of the tail of his eye, as sailors say— noticed that Carmen gave him rather a long glance, and he fancied that it was slightly questioning, though about what he could not guess. It took his attention for the moment from Miss Winrose, and he had to ask her to repeat a question that he was conscious she had put to him.

All this went on before the vessel had made a great start on her way back. Soon afterwards the wind stiffened, the squalls dropped disagreeably down on them again, and there was something to notice besides themselves and what was inboard. It was then that Hamil was reminded of the weak mast, and that they had no motive power of any consequence except their sails. He looked at Quesencourt, and saw that the Englishman was worrying, though was doing his best to keep it to himself.

It speedily appeared that he had cause to worry. The windward sea was now often green with squalls, and lashed white where

they bit the water. The wind made more noise, and made it longer, and from wildly whistling outside deepened to an ominous roar where it was caught in the canvas. Nobody was saying much now.

A still heavier squall blew down, and this time, though Quesencourt promptly luffed, the craft jarred under the shock, and was slow in filling away.

"Mr. Hamil," Quesencourt said—and he tried to speak coolly, and with no fuss—"won't you be so kind as to fetch the hatchet? You 'll find it just inside the cuddy door, on the right. It is in a becket."

Hamil dived inside, and brought it out.

"Thanks." Quesencourt put it down at his feet.

"If you please," said Miss Winrose anxiously, "what do you want with the hatchet? We are not going to be wrecked, are we?"

"I hope not," Quesencourt answered; and he pluckily smiled.

"Then why?"

"Well, to tell the truth, the mast is a little

weak, and in one possible contingency we *might* have to cut it away. Or, if it went of itself, it might be necessary to clear it from the rigging. Don't worry, though, for nothing of the kind is very likely to happen."

Baum stroked his woolly beard, and looked in his subtly penetrating way at the speaker. Though the Jew was no sailor, he readily guessed that the Englishman was hiding a part of the truth.

But they did not have time for much more talk, or worrying. Another squall tore down, fairly screaming, this time. Quesencourt set his lips, and shoved over the tiller. Hamil had meanwhile jumped to the main sheet.

But what followed was a very brief piece of business, and nobody on board had time to think much about it. As the sloop rolled into the wind the peppering squall almost blinded the company, and they stooped to it. The brave little craft sustained herself, the weight of the thing passed, Quesencourt put up his helm—and just then the mast went!

CHAPTER XV.

CAST AWAY

IN the midst of the pitching and tumbling that followed Quesencourt snatched up the hatchet and whacked away at the shrouds. Miss Winrose had lost her balance, and fallen upon her knees with a scream, while Carmen, turning very white, seized Hamil's arm. The Jew squatted low in the boat.

But very quickly Quesencourt had cut away all the raffle but the forestay, and the boat bounced her way around, and trailed at the limit of her sea-anchor.

Quesencourt, dropping the hatchet, drew a long breath of relief.

"We 're all right now," he said. "Just as well, though, that did n't take us in the middle of the squall."

Carmen had meanwhile released Hamil's arm, and Miss Winrose, silent but white, staggered up. Hamil instantly caught her, and steadied her to a seat. Baum muttered something in German, and came out of his crouch looking a little bewildered.

"You 've left that stuff for a drag, I suppose?" Hamil said questioningly, nodding towards the mast and its raffle. He was the only one steady enough to meet Quesencourt's remark with an answer.

"Yes," Quesencourt said; "it is what we need just now."

"Oh, dear!" Miss Winrose sighed, "I thought we were never going to need anything any more."

Carmen put her hands for an instant to her face.

"There!" she said, taking them down again, "I believe I am steady again. What next, Mr. Quesencourt? With the mast gone, I suppose we shan't capsize; but how are we to get back?"

"I can't answer that question just now," he

said; "but before we are through we shall fetch it about. I beg you won't worry."

He cast a look to leeward, then came over and sat down by her. With no resistance on her part, he took one of her hands and reassuringly patted it.

"We shall come to no harm, but we may have to knock about a bit before we fetch back. I should like to land on some island, if only a little deserted one, for of course I don't want to go any farther to sea than necessary. Just now we seem to be heading for open water."

"Let me look," she said, rising. She faced aft,—it must be remembered that the hulk was proceeding stern foremost,—and took a long look at the seaboard.

"We can't get back to Cucumber Island," she then announced, "but there 's a nest of small islands a little farther out. There they are. We are not heading straight for them, but would n't it be possible to alter the course with the oars?"

All hands were standing up now, though

Miss Winrose was clinging to Hamil, and Carmen was having the support of Quesencourt's hand, and all were looking eagerly for the islets. They made them out at once, and by that time Quesencourt had answered Carmen's question. "Yes," he told her, "we could alter our course considerably with the sweeps. The wind is n't very strong, and the squalls won't bother us in this shape as they did before."

There was a suspense now of some minutes, but after that Quesencourt was prepared with a definite plan.

"We can't do better than to try for one of those little islands. The best one will be the most westerly, and where you can see a little opening, or bight. When the right time comes we will have Mr. Baum cut away the drag, and you and I, Mr. Dana, will take the oars. We shan't swamp getting around, and after that we can sufficiently control her."

"All right," Hamil agreed with inspiring heartiness.

The time seemed long before Quesencourt gave the signal to Baum. The hatchet fell, and the wreck lifted her head on high, and began to drop away. In a twinkling the two powerful men were tugging at the sweeps. They must take the wind on the quarter, with no sail to steady the clumsy hulk, and with tons of weight to control so there was going to be plenty to do.

Baum offered to steer, but by the way he spoke it was clear that he had little idea of what steering meant. In a moment Carmen grasped the tiller. "I know how to steer a boat going with oars," she said.

"Thank you," the two men answered in chorus.

She was of material help, though at times the lifting and rolling of the heavy craft balked everything she could do. By and by Baum took hold with her, and helped to furnish—as he afterwards put it—the "unintelligent brawn."

But with everything that they were doing,

it began to look doubtful whether they could fetch the split islet.

Hamil half rose, and glanced over his shoulder.

"We 've got to improve on this. Mr. Quesencourt, pull a little harder, if it does use up some of your reserve wind. Miss McAllister, steer wholly with him. Mr. Baum, there's a small oar in the cuddy. Bring it out, please, and row on Mr. Quesencourt's side. I am going to put in some more powder."

Quesencourt looked a little surprised, and obviously doubtful, but he prepared to carry out his part of the suggestion. Baum rushed in, and brought out the oar. He found a place to ship it, and braced his feet. Meanwhile, Hamil, who was in an outing shirt, with no coat or vest, unbuttoned the shirt at the throat and at the wrists.

"All right," he shouted, as he saw that they were ready. In a moment his great body swayed backward, and the huge oar flashed, and was buried far back.

He was not very skillful, especially with such an oar as this, but he knew enough to make the blade bite, and to recover, and the rest was sheer animal strength.

Before he had taken half a dozen strokes the look on Quesencourt's face changed, and was succeeded by astonishment. He got a little better brace for his feet, and put still more "beef" into his stroke. But though Hamil had the laboring oar, and though Baum was rowing on the weather side, and Carmen had her helm hard up, the boat's nose gradually worked up into the wind. By this time they had all noticed the sudden responsive lift of the otherwise sluggish mass every time that Hamil strained back on his oar. His strength must be something amazing. Finally, the head of the boat was so high that he had to slack a little.

But at last they had the reward of so much zeal and hard work. By the time they were close to the islet they were fairly to windward of it, and could ease up, merely keeping her course straight.

"Well, now, but that's jolly hard work," panted Quesencourt as he leaned forward on his oar. "Shoot me, but I am nearly done up! I say, Dana, you must be stronger than one of your American grizzlies!"

Hamil, who was in much better wind than the admiring Englishman, merely smiled. The fact was, he was not only very strong, but had uncommon powers of endurance. He had lived a clean, wholesome life, and had found means and time to get considerable exercise, even while traveling, and otherwise knocking about.

Poor Baum was so completely out of wind that he could not speak, and his hands had begun to blister. Even Carmen, what with tugging at the stiff tiller, and the mental strain, was pretty nearly fagged out. Only Miss Winrose, a passenger, had come through the mishap entirely fresh.

The hulk slid forward on the seas, passed the tiny capes that defined the entrance to the haven, and rolled seething onward amongst a thick growth of rushes, and so to a scallop of

sand and runs of gravel and scrubby bushes. They had already hauled up the center-board, and the round-built hull slid ahead through the rushes, losing speed every instant, and at last drove her nose into the spit of sand, stopping with a tremendous jar, where it instantly heeled over.

They had been prepared for this however by holding on fast. Quesencourt had steadied Carmen, and Hamil Miss Winrose. Baum was on his knees, clinging to the center-board well. Still, the shock was so great that the Englishman and Carmen were thrown to hands and knees, and Hamil and his charge knocked into the rail. Baum alone kept his anchorage.

The girls cried out in relief, and the men helped them out over the bow, and upon some rocks. The hulk had forced her way so far that they had a perfectly dry landing.

"Let 's find a better place than this," said Quesencourt. "There 's a little break in the bushes just by you, Mr. Baum. Can't we go that way to higher ground?"

"We 'll see. 'Who follows me leaves hope behind.' No, that is n't just it, is it? Well, never mind. Follow me, ye wrecked ones, just the same."

With this brave attempt to be cheerful, the man pushed forward into the little break, and the others trooped after.

It did prove to lead to much higher and better ground, and that at once. They came out on a low summit, which was the cap of the island. It was mainly ledge and iron-colored boulders, but there were some grass and bushes, and a respectable clump of low evergreen trees. Here they faced the southern seaboard.

"Oh, this is n't so bad," declared Hamil, backing up the Jew's plucky beginning. "We can get along all right till we are taken off."

"Oh, must we wait for that?" asked Miss Winrose, looking blank. "Can't we repair the boat?"

"Nothing to make a new mast of," explained Quesencourt, "and no sails if we had."

"But could n't you take out the ballast and row?" she persisted.

"Doubtless; but it would be as a last resort," he replied.

"You see," Quesencourt further explained, "the distance is rather great, and the boat, even with the ballast gone, would be heavy and clumsy. Besides, the prevailing winds are now from the west and northwest, so that we should have those against us. Then again, it is altogether probable that the forward part of the vessel is seriously injured. No, I should say that it would be the best way to build a signal fire, and run up a distress flag. We have one flag with the national colors, and we can show that union down. That always means distress. There are so many vessels going and coming that it would n't be long before one would see the flag, and come. This is supposing that the Major does n't find us sooner."

"I see," she said, now convinced. "Oh, well, we have something to eat and drink, and it 's mild weather, so of course we shan't suf-

fer. And in fact"—her eyes were lighted a little—"it will be a grain romantic."

She glanced up at Hamil with the fullest innocence and child-like simplicity of a guileless face. Unfortunately, he was just then looking in another direction.

It was Carmen who was at the moment taking his attention. She looked troubled.

"I am thinking how papa and Bess will worry," she said. "When we don't appear, even late into the night, they will know that something has gone wrong."

"And as soon as it is light they will take the launch and start," Hamil assured her, "and before noon they will find us. They will see our smoke and guess what has happened."

"Oh, do you think so?" Carmen brightened. "You are splendid to be so comforting."

"Thank you, but I am sincere. Wait and see if I am not right. I have just been thinking about it, and it seems clear and reasonable."

"Then I 'll take fresh courage. You will, too, won't you Miss Winrose?"

"One of the first things that Robinson Crusoe did after he got ashore," put in Baum, "was to look after the grub. Why not we do it? Had n't we better get everything we shall be likely to want through the night out of the vessel?"

"There 's time enough for it," said Quesencourt; "but still, we might as well do it now. Besides, the water may work its way into the cuddy."

So the three men went back to the wreck, and brought ashore about everything that the cuddy contained. This gave them plenty of food and water, with a tarpaulin, the oilskins, and some other things that might come in handy at night. It was then proposed by Baum to make the girls a bower, and with the aid of the tarpaulin this was done. A clump of low-branched evergreens was the frame. Next, Carmen suggested that they start their signal-fire and hoist their distress-flag, and this was instantly agreed to. They built the fire on a little open point, and fastened the flag to the top of a lone pine close by. They cut

away the branches immediately below the flag, that it might be the more conspicuous.

Quesencourt had a spyglass, and Hamil had brought along a pair of field-glasses, so that now they had something to do in looking out for vessels. This helped to interest the girls anyhow, and take their attention, and so was bound to be time well spent.

But they got no direct and tangible results. There were more or less sails in view, but nothing seemed to be bound their way, and the only steamer that came into range was one bound nearly east, and that soon lost its white bulk and melted away on the dusky sea-line. No launches or other like small craft came in sight at all.

After a while the girls got a little discouraged; and Miss Winrose declared she was sleepy and was going to the bower for a nap, while Carmen strolled off in the direction of the little bight, where their wrecked boat was. That quarter faced home, which doubtless she was worryingly thinking about just then. In a short time it would be nightfall,

and the folks at home would look for them. It was the plan to return not later than dark. There was no machinery to play them false, the winds had been sufficient for good sailing, and never extremely heavy, so that a great delay would be hard to account for.

CHAPTER XVI

ALTER EGO

OF the men, Baum betook himself to his pipe, and stretched out comfortably under a tree, while Hamil and Quesencourt for a time kept up a perfunctory goggling with their glasses.

The Englishman, however, at last put aside his binoculars and rather glumly fished up a cigar. Hamil, not caring for such solace or beguilement, and being withal restless, idled down to the waterside. At present with a moderate southerly wind stirring, and the heat being pretty well out of the air, he could cruise in this direction with comfort.

There was a small bit of shingle near the northerly head of the islet, and this followed a wide cleft between some great ledges that ran out into the sea itself, and finally appeared to join another tiny beach just around the

westerly bend. Hamil passed through the cleft, but found that there was some deception about the continuation of the beach, for almost at once it stopped short, and ended against the flank of a great mass of granite rock.

But he found something more interesting than the beach to look at, for Carmen McAllister was sitting on the top of the rock.

She was looking towards the water; he had not made noise enough in walking to rise above the wash and tumble of the sea, so that she was unaware of his approach. He could turn back, therefore, and not seem to intrude. This he started to do, but stepped on a piece of driftwood, which snapped, producing a sound distinctly different from that of the waves. She glanced quickly around and saw him.

"Excuse me for seeming to be on your track," he apologized, "but I did n't know that you had come around here. I was merely poking about trying to kill time."

"It 's all right," she said pleasantly. "I

am not sorry to have company. The fact is, I was growing rather blue and poky."

She seemed to take it for granted that he would join her, so he promptly scrambled up the rock and did so. She was sitting on a kind of natural bench, such as the seas now and then take the notion to carve out in the course of a few hundred thousand years, and there was plenty of room for him.

"If I can cheer you up," he plucked up a gay air to assert, "I shall be worth while and shall be glad I came. I can guess what the trouble is, for naturally you are thinking of home, and how the folks will worry. I would n't let that take hold of me overmuch, for I don't think it will be as bad as you suppose. Your father and Bess will make allowance for small accidents, and though of course they will be anxious, I don't think they will seriously worry. And in any case, now that the wind has worked to the south, we may be able to make our own way back. I don't think the sloop is very bad below the water-line; if she is n't, and we can get her

off, we can rig a jury-mast. The tarpaulin will answer for a sail."

"That sounds well," she brightened a trifle and responded. "Yes, I was just then thinking of father and Bess, and how they would worry."

"There 's something or other black at night —what is it? Oh, yes, sorrow.—'But joy cometh in the morning.' In the morning, if they don't come to us, we will find a way to go to them."

He smiled optimistically, and sat up sturdily, as if to make his large form give added impressiveness to his prophecy.

"You have a little 'podsnappery' at times that I like," she said meditatively. "It is always for a good purpose, and somehow it is pretty sure to count. Now I am beginning to see—only, in reality, I don't see—that what you say is plausible. Let that go, then. We go back to the island in the morning."

"That is, if they don't come for us."

"Yes. But I see—*that* is what you really are relying on."

"It is the more probable of the two possibilities," he admitted. "But I thank you for whatever compliment may be in the podsnappery business."

"You are very welcome."

He took off his cap, and hung it on his knee. The sea before them was beautiful. The back-slant of the declining sun was trembling far east and flicking star-points in some places on the water, but cutting out clearly the very sea-rim itself. On the edge of that sharply-defined precipice—that end of all the world—stood out the white, leaning pillar of a sail. Yet more to the south a dusky gray was blotting out the clear lines, and was beginning to mount higher, making almost an even boundary against the fading blue.

"I am going to ask one question," he said musingly. "If you don't like it don't answer. I suppose I am trespassing upon forbidden ground, but this is not exactly an ordinary occasion. For the moment we seem to be the only two in the world. Well, then, this is it: Am I still Jack Beauchamp to

you? I want to get rid of him, you know, for now that his wife is dead he 'lags superfluous on the stage.' Will you forgive the whim in asking the question? It is n't entirely inside the taboo line, I hope."

She sat up a bit straighter, as a person might do that was growing dreamy, but was suddenly startled by some practical question. She continued to look out to sea, as, for that matter, he was still doing, and the answer was not instantly forthcoming. He glanced at her.

"I don't see why your question should be taboo," she began then. "Why, to be honest, you *don't* seem just like Jack Beauchamp, and I will say—will say that you strike me as enlarging from him. But you must keep in mind," she qualified hastily, "that it is not you that has changed, but I. Till you came here I knew you from the standpoint of Edith, and she had capriciously shut you inside a shell. Now you are trying to break out. Well, I don't blame you, though as Jack Beauchamp, you were excellent, and all right.

Still, it is natural to want to pass for what you are worth. There, have n't I been frank?"

"You have," he said emphatically, "and I am obliged to you."

The golden sparkles on the water turned to silver, and the seas out of their bounds gathered blackness. The gray in the south was rolling higher, but at the same time dragging along the water, where there were little curling wreaths, almost like pale smoke.

"The fog is coming in," she said, "and I suppose we had better go."

"Yes, I suppose we had."

A light that bespoke satisfaction had played over his face for an instant as she answered his question, but this she had not seen. He rose now, and looked for the easiest way down from the rock.

He found Quesencourt just coming around the short bend. To Hamil's notion the Englishman was hardly well pleased, and he was certainly looking in sharp question that way.

"None of his business, either," Hamil snapped to himself; "he has no claim on her."

He turned back to her very deliberately, and smilingly said:

"The shortest way home seems to be the steepest and rockiest. If you will give me your hand we can get down at this little notch."

"Oh, there is Mr. Quesencourt," she said. "Hello!" she hailed him, "we 'll be there in a minute."

He waved his hand, and let that stand for an answer.

Hamil got down a step, and turned to help her. To his amazement she shrank back. The natural look had gone out of her face; it was pale, and her eyes were staringly open.

"Carmen! what is it?"

He sprang to her, and tried to take her hands.

"No! no! I—I don't want you. Something is wrong—my head!"

She went another step back, and collapsed, dropping to her knees. By this time Quesencourt had seen that something was wrong, and now came at a headlong scramble up the rock.

"What's the matter? What ails her? Carmen, tell me—"

"No! no! not you either! Keep back. Give me time to—to—"

But she ended by sinking forward, with her arms outstretched.

They both flew to her, but Hamil reached her first. He stooped to pick her up, but Quesencourt, half-wild, as it seemed, caught his arm.

"Give her to me," he fiercely demanded. "She is the same as betrothed to me. I won't stand it to have you interfere. You presume altogether too much."

Hamil wrenched his arm free, at the same time gathering her fully up.

"Stand back, Quesencourt! She is not yet betrothed to you, as I happen to know. And I loved her as Edith, and don't know but I am beginning to love her as Carmen. I am not in a humor to be fooled with, so hands off. I am going to carry her back to the camp and without any help."

But Quesencourt came of a long line of

dogged, hard-fighting men, and he merely set his jaws, and gripped Hamil's arm.

"I realize the emergency as much as you, but—" He got no further.

The girl herself struggling in Hamil's arms now raised her head.

"Jack, is this you? What is the matter? Where are you carrying me? This gentleman will think it queer to see you toting your wife about in such a way. I can walk all right."

It was lucky that she had got back her strength, for the giant almost lost his. He let her slide to her feet.

"Why, Jack, dear, you seem to be so weak! What is it? Tell Edith.—For Heaven's sake what is happening to us all!"

CHAPTER XVII

WAGER OF BATTLE

BUT the surprise and the wild, almost fierce delight that swept like a hurricane over the man, kept him for an instant speechless. Then, desperately pulling himself together, while his strength likewise came back, he steadily and soothingly said:

"It was nothing. I am all right. Everything is all right. This gentleman is a friend."

The puzzled girl looked a little curiously at Quesencourt.

"Excuse me sir, but have n't I seen you before? Yes, I have. Why it is Mr. Quesencourt, my father's friend. I am glad to see you.—There, Jack, dear, I do remember him after all. I told you once I did n't. But my head is better than it used to be.—Say, Jack, why are we all here? What is going on?

It seems as if I have been in a long dream. Has my old trouble been bothering me?"

With a sharp breath, Quesencourt walked up to her.

"Miss McAllister, for God's sake make an effort, and try to shake this off. You are not Edith. There is no Edith. This man is not Jack Beauchamp, but John Dana. He is nothing to you. I have your promise to consider a marriage with me. Don't you remember? Can't you make it all come back to you?"

But she shrank away from him, her brows puckered in wonder and troubled confusion.

She looked up in Hamil's face.

"Jack, he must be crazy! What does he mean? Don't let him talk so. Send him away."

"Mr. Quesencourt," said Hamil in a low, quiet tone, but one that any prudent man would have given the most serious attention to, "you see how the matter stands. Be kind enough to go. Edith and I will follow at once."

"That 's right, Jack. I knew you would n't stand such talk, even if he is a little queer."

She came close, tucking her hand under his arm.

He looked down at her. A sort of recklessness came over him, and he let his face show what he felt.

Quesencourt saw it. He looked from one to the other, and went pale under his tan. He made a fierce, dabbing gesture.

"I won't stand it. You shall never take such an advantage! You are no part of a man, or you would not. She does n't care a spark for you, and when she is herself, she does care for me. I will relieve you of all responsibility as her attendant. I will explain to her father. Now let her alone, or you will have something to regret."

Hamil's face, already grave, grew portentously dark.

"Quesencourt, I think I know my duty and my rights, and I shall uphold both. I have already promised what is reasonable, and I shall concede nothing more. Now be care-

ful what you do for if you insist on trouble you will make a serious mistake."

Quesencourt unbuttoned his wristbands, and turned back his cuffs. Both he and Hamil were in outing shirts, and wore their trousers belted.

"This is n't a tugging match with oars, as I am going to show you. Put the lady one side, for one of us is going to make good in this business!"

Hamil simply led the wondering and now worried girl a little one side. "Stay here a moment, dear. This Mr. Quesencourt has the freak—as you say, he is a little queer—of wanting to fight. At such times it does him good to accommodate him. It won't take long. Don't be afraid."

He did not bother with his cuffs, but walked quietly out in the open space. Here the rock was almost flat.

"A little harder under foot than a ring canvas," he said carelessly, "but no matter. I don't consider myself responsible for accidents."

Quesencourt, his face serious enough—for doubtless he had some idea of what he had undertaken—yet with steady, fighting eyes, walked quickly up.

Not a word was said, but instantly they were at work. Quesencourt, who had evidently had a careful training as a boxer, feinted swiftly with his left hand, and put in a short, jolty right blow. Hamil had not been caught unawares, but coolly blocked it. Then he rushed.

It was impossible, at least for poor, dazed Edith, to tell just what happened next. She saw Hamil's head go a little back, as if he had run into Quesencourt's fist, but almost on the instant one of his shoulders went forward, and Quesencourt, who was now almost blanketed by Hamil's larger body, went two or three steps back. He seemed to have parried a tremendous blow, but to have done so by the mere skin of his teeth. He was all but toppled from his balance, and was still not quite firm on his feet. Then Hamil rushed again. This time he let go left and right.

Edith could see now what happened. She saw Quesencourt's head jerk back, as if it had been yanked with a rope, and on the instant he staggered, his shoulders sagged, and he was down in a heap. Hamil jumped forward, but it was to try to break his fall. He was too late, but luckily the tumble had swung the lurching head over upon one of the extended arms, so that it did not land on the rock.

Hamil was instantly on his knees beside him. He had seen how he brought up, but wanted to make sure of other things. He felt him over, and looked at the place where the knockout blow had landed. It was at the top of the forehead.

Meanwhile Edith had come anxiously up.

"How is he? Do they have to hit him like that every time he has a crazy spell? I should think it was pretty harsh medicine. But of course you did n't have anybody to help you, so you had to be rough."

"That 's it," he assented. "I had to be rough. Oh, he does n't have these spells very

often. He 's only stunned now. He 'll come to in a few minutes. Perhaps, though, you had better go down to the shore—be careful and not fall in—and get a little water. Take his cap. It is covered with oilskin, and will make a better vessel than mine."

But he saw that she could not make the journey very quickly, unless she went dangerously fast, and he took the cap from her. "Look after him, and I 'll go."

"All right. I 'll take his head in my lap, and keep it off the rock."

"H—m. Well, as to that—yes, I suppose it would be humane."

"Why, Jack, you look a little queer. You don't feel sensitive about it, do you? The poor man won't know it, and besides, as you say, it would be humane. It seems to me that you never used to mind such things, and as this poor man is crazy besides—"

"Oh, certainly, certainly, scoop his head up. I don't care. I 'll be back with the water in a jiffy."

He was. And it was not long before Quesencourt opened his eyes.

As is usual in such cases, he did not know at first what had happened, and showed that the clock of his mind had stopped at the last thing before the knockout.

He blinked up at the two, but when he saw who was holding his head he smiled.

"I must have got a tumble. Was that it? I dare say I hit my heel on a rock. In just a minute, Dana, I will be with you, and we will resume. I am not the kind that goes out in a round."

"But you are out in one this time," Hamil said unsparingly. "I put one over that took you into dreamland. No, you did n't stumble, and your head did n't bring up on a rock. And you are in no shape to fight any longer, as I think you will see when you stand up."

"How persistent he is!" interjected Edith wonderingly. "But I have been told that some—I must n't hurt his feelings—that people in certain states of mind are so. Only I

did n't know that Mr. Quesencourt ever had such a trouble."

"'Trouble!'" Quesencourt echoed wonderingly. "Pray Miss McAllister, what do you mean? There, now, I am able to sit up, and thank you for your kindness. Dana, I will give you credit for that punch, since you say you delivered it. But I should like another chance, for I am sure I could do better. Wait a bit, till I satisfy you that I am good for a few more rounds."

"You die hard," commented Hamil with a certain grim humor. Nevertheless, as downright physical courage always commands respect, he recovered himself at once, and with a pleasant nod replied:

"All right. Get up, then, and see how you do feel."

The plucky fellow dizzily lurched, as he tried, but finally did manage to get on his legs. But his look, after he had stood there a moment, told the whole story. He was weak, and all the spring was out of him. Besides, it was evident that his head was still unsteady.

"Jove! I take it I *am* out of the running this time," he shook his head, and reluctantly acknowledged. "You are a heavy hitter, Dana, and you have such weight behind you that it is hard to stall you off. Still, on a better and smoother ground, I think that I might give you an argument. At least I believe I could for a few rounds. Ah, and now I see that I have given you a mouse. It is over your right eye. That's where I got in my left."

"You got it in," said Hamil deliberately, but at last showing a little irritation, "because I was willing to take it for the sake of closing the business quickly. I could have kept at our fighting and beaten you to pieces. And listen: I did n't put all my strength into that final clip. I let out just hard enough to bowl you over. I had the thought that you might smash your head on the rock. I am willing to give you credit for boxing well, but you have n't the beef and bones for me. Besides, I know something about the game myself."

"Gad, and that's so!" Quesencourt admit-

ted with emphasis. "Say, you would stand a downright good chance to win the championship of the world. Too bad the ring can't fetch you! As a sporting man I—um! my left arm is half broken. It must have been in stopping that first clip. I realized at the time that it was like a mule-kick. Well, and if it is all over, then, suppose we go back to the camp? There are some important things that remain to be settled. The moral issue is still left. You know what I mean. You are in honor bound to—play that her father was here. Do nothing that would—"

"That will do," sharply broke in Hamil. "I don't purpose to be dictated to. And I wish you to know that I have done nothing, and shall do nothing different from what her father has seen done, and has not objected to, has, in fact, commended."

Quesencourt flamed up with anger, both at Hamil's manner, and at the speech itself.

"Pretty high talk for an adventurer nurse," he rasped. "Do you mean to tell me that her father permitted endearments, and things of

that sort? It 's too fishy, and I 'll believe it when he says so."

"Jack," put in Edith softly, "don't mind him. What is the use in arguing with crazy people? There, I said it after all, did n't I? And I was n't going to, on account of hurting his feelings."

Hamil saw the humor of the thing, and laughingly nodded.

"All right. We will suspend for the present."

Even Quesencourt rather dismally grinned.

"It is a comedy of errors that can't last long," he mumbled.

"Where is camp, and what do you mean by it?" asked Edith.

"Oh, just over here," Hamil evasively answered. "I may as well tell you," he went on after a moment's hesitation, "that you have had a little trouble with your head, but you are all right now."

"Ah, that 's what I thought." Her face gloomed over. "I was in hope I should n't have any more such spells. But this time,

Jack, things seem to have taken a new turn. I can bring back certain—were they dreams? Is it true, Jack, that after all you are musical —that you can sing and play?"

He started.

"Why, eh—yes, I can. What else?" he asked anxiously.

Quesencourt was surprised also, and was now listening as intently as Hamil himself.

"Let me see," she thoughtfully went on. "Well, for one thing, you notice that I remembered Mr. Quesencourt. Only I did n't recall that—recall his trouble. But he seems to be all right now," she subjoined wonderingly, glancing at the Englishman's interested expression.

"Yes, he 's quite right now," said Hamil hastily, "but what else? By the way, I did note at the time that it was odd you should have recalled his looks. On a former occasion his name came up, and you did n't remember it. Well, and what else?"

"Oh, I don't know. It is rather hard for me to think. Ah, is n't it true that you and I

were a little formal to each other? It was back there on Le Bijou. Why was it, Jack? I am almost sorry I dug it out of my brain, though no doubt you can explain it. Was it for the same reason that some of the old things were? Was my mental condition a little bad, so it was best that I should keep quiet, and a part of the time by myself?"

"Yes, yes; that was it."

He was relieved to have the explanation put ready-made into his hands.

"And Mr. Baum, father's friend, was there," she next said. "Stop. How could I know that? I think I never saw him, though I have often heard father speak of him. Yet he was there—he was certainly there. Oh, and he sang and played on the harp! Why, I recall a sort of pun he made! He spoke of his harp as a 'jew's-harp.' Is n't that so?"

Hamil scarcely knew what to think. He had never seen her like this before. For the first time she seemed to be getting things clearly out of an immediate past. Here seemed to be the beginning of an actual com-

mingling, a blending into one, of the two personalities so widely different. How much farther would she go? It was a bewildering, an almost uncanny, thought that she might bring herself back—at any rate, so that she might behold herself as Carmen. Then what would happen? Would she arrive at any firmer ground? Or would she become the victim of a terrible conflict, from which perhaps there might come a complete mental overthrow.

He shuddered. It was no easy matter to keep the apprehension provoked by such reflections out of his face; nevertheless, by a mighty effort he schooled his features to lend her only that degree of gravity the occasion warranted.

After the pause, he answered her: "Yes, Mr. Baum did sing, and he played the harp. Also he sprang the pun."

"I am glad to be so clear in all that," she said, her lovely face aglow with delight. "And what else? Let me think."

In her child fashion she turned her back

on him, and put her hand to her cheek. All at once she cried out.

"Oh, no! no!" She whirled around, and ran to him.

"Jack, I had a dreadful thought. I don't want it! Don't let me have it. Talk about something. Try to drive it away!"

She clapped her head on his arm, and took his hand and put it on her head. "Squeeze my head a little. No, push down on it—that's it. Hold it with both your hands for a minute."

He silently did so. He was almost cold with anxiety. This might be the terrible crisis that he had pictured. He could not forgive himself now that he had pushed the questioning.

Quesencourt, for the moment disarmed of his jealousy, looked on gravely and anxiously.

It was a full minute before she spoke again. Then she said, stopping and picking some of her words:

"I feel better, though still there is some—some confusion. But that dreadful feeling

must n't come back. It might drive me crazy. It was as if two—two somethings—were fighting together in my brain. I don't mean in a physical sense. I can't explain it. I think, Jack, that something will by and by come of it. I feel so—I don't want to bother with anything more now. Take me to your camp, Jack."

"Yes, dear. That 's just what I will do. Mr. Quesencourt, who is for the present all over his trouble, will go along, too. By the way, Mr. Quesencourt, it was a little strange that you should fall, and bump your head, and that I should bump mine in trying to save you."

"Remarkably strange." He saw the point, and grinned feebly.

"Now that is like you!" Edith broke out admiringly, all at once seeming to forget her own troubles. "Yes, for of course you are going to tell that fib to save Mr. Quesencourt's pride. You are all right now, are n't you, Mr. Quesencourt, so you don't mind the allusion?"

"Oh, yes, I am quite all right." But in spite of the circumstances he spoke a grain testily.

"I fear I am not quite so generous as you think," Hamil had the tact to answer. "No, we are going to tell the fib mainly to avoid general talk, and surmises—Come, then, if you are ready."

He led her down from the rock, and Quesencourt, still somewhat shaken, and uncertain in the joints, more slowly followed.

Edith kept Hamil's arm after they were down, and on the way back she got hold of his hand. Quesencourt knit his brows as he noted the act, but the situation hardly allowed of interference, so he said nothing. It was true, though, that the change in the girl—her child ways, and almost pitiful dependence on Hamil—true that this new and previously unbelievable situation went some way in toning down the first hot anger and indignation he had felt.

As the distance was so short they took but a trifle of time to cover it; however, Hamil

hung back at the last moment, pretending to have found a new woods flower. As Quesencourt came abreast of them Hamil touched his arm. A look explained. It meant that he should slip ahead, and get in a hint that should prepare Baum and Miss Winrose for the metamorphosis in Carmen.

Quesencourt nodded understandingly, and before Hamil was through with the flower he was clear of the trees and bushes, and was making some energetic signs to Baum. Miss Winrose was still in the bower.

But as the Jew was getting the sense of the signs, Miss Winrose appeared. From the direction that she came she was facing the sea, and on the instant gave a little cry.

"Oh, the launch! See?"

A good-sized launch at full speed was seen passing them. Just then those on board appeared to see the flag and the smoke, and there was a little flurry. Quickly her speed slackened, and in a moment she was coming about.

Hamil saw that he must be quick if he would save confusion and awkwardness on

Edith's account, and he stepped along to Miss Winrose, and said low but energetically:

"Carmen has changed back to Edith. Don't appear to notice it. She may treat you as a stranger, and she may not."

He saw by a look from Baum that the Jew was already posted, and with that he dropped back to Edith's side again.

CHAPTER XVIII

A NEW PHASE

THE launch was now fast coming close. Quesencourt climbed down the bank to a projecting ledge and there awaited her hail. A big old man in a little unbecoming cap and a gray suit, including knickerbockers, stood up forward; he placed his hands trumpet fashion and shouted:

"Hello, there!"

"Hello!" Quesencourt responded.

"In trouble?"

"Yes. We lost the mast of our sloop-yacht, and barely fetched in here. We have nothing to make proper repairs with, and don't see how we are going to get away."

"You see us, don't you? and we see that there are ladies in your party. That's enough. Is it deep water close in to that ledge?"

"Yes; more than your vessel will draw."

"All right. We 'll fetch in there."

"That seems to be all," Quesencourt called up to the others. "Do you mind handing the luggage down to me, Mr. Baum? I fell on a ledge a few minutes ago, and got rather a bad shaking up, and I think I will save myself what climbing I can. Mr. Dana, you got a little thump, too, but if your head is all right will you help the ladies start? I will meet them half way?"

He got all the help he wanted, and perhaps a little more, for Hamil, when it came to Edith, did not hand her down, but went along with her to the bottom. By the time they were all assembled below the power-boat slipped cautiously up.

There was no trouble in boarding her, and when they were all safely bestowed she backed away, and the big man then asked Quesencourt whither they wished to be taken.

"We came from Le Bijou, an island in there coastwards," Quesencourt answered; "but perhaps it will take you too far off your

course to land us there. If that 's the case, why just land us at the nearest inhabited place."

"We were merely cruising for pleasure," the big man said, "and we can go there as well as anywhere. We have a very fast boat, and she won't make much of a few miles more or less."

"That 's very good of you, and we are much obliged," Quesencourt said.

Hamil and the others also thanked him, and after that there were some introductions. It proved that the big man was president of a Western college, and he had with him his young wife and her boy brother. His company was made up of a skipper and engineer, but it seemed that he also knew something about power craft. He was a trifle brusque at the first go-off, but not afterwards, and his wife was a beaming, amiable little creature, so that the castaways found that they had fallen into very good hands. It did not take his wife long to get fairly well acquainted with Carmen and Miss Winrose, and in fact,

before the boat was half way to the island they were all agreeably inside the outworks of reserve. They exchanged small confidences that it would have taken men a month to reach, and reached instant agreement on twenty subjects.

But it all helped the situation in certain ways. The women made such a merry little stir that Hamil, Quesencourt and Baum did not have to say very much. This suited all three, for Hamil, with Edith close by, was cozily happy, and did not need words, Quesencourt was sore both in mind and body, and so preferred to gloom, and Baum was both tired and sleepy. But more than all, there was a timely escape from what would have been a situation of strain and awkwardness. At best, the almost terrifying jugglery of the recent transformation would have been hard to meet and accept, and at the same time to appear to ignore. Now there would be time for mental adjustment, and there would not of necessity be any shock to the girl herself. Her father and Bess, however great they

would find the disappointment, would be prepared. To them it would be neither new nor strange.

But of course it would be too much to expect that what had happened would be entirely ignored and forgotten even in the little time that they should be on the boat. Hamil was not seriously disturbed, therefore when, in the growing dusk, he once or twice made out the gleam of Quesencourt's eyes, and saw that he was trying to read Edith's face; neither did he mind that Miss Winrose several times feigned to be deeply interested in something that Edith was saying as an excuse for a straight and really searching look. They might as well get the key of the piece one time as another, for certainly they must soon join in the tune.

Thinking of this finally made Hamil smile. He was returning to power, and could afford to be generous. He would even hold in a little before Quesencourt, and unless Edith herself made one of her innocent advances he would content himself with quiet looks and

touches. In speaking to her he could not be quite so obliging, for she would expect affectionate words, and he would stir up a thousand Quesencourts before he would as much as bring one look of question into her eyes.

He glanced at her now. She sat beside him, but with her face towards the professor's wife and Miss Winrose, and he could leisurely take in the perfect curve of her cheek, the round pink of her neck, and the billows of her splendid hair. Even as he was stirred by the old tenderness that was not quite passion because so much pity and high responsibility went with it, yet was compelling, and fair for a man to have—even as this moved him, she carelessly put out her hand, and while still listening to Miss Winrose, patted his knee. It was the first time that she had done anything like this since they had come aboard, and if these new people noticed it doubtless they would be surprised, though of course that would not matter. They would suppose him to be her lover.

This rather pleased him, also, and he

glanced at them, but neither seemed to be noticing. Edith dropped her hand, then, and used it to emphasize a remark, but the touch seemed to linger.

"God bless you!" he could not help saying under his breath.

The professor had not exaggerated the speed of his boat, and almost before Hamil, in his serenity and satisfaction, wished, Le Bijou was close aboard. As they rounded the outlying point they saw lights on the floating wharf, and the shapes of people passing to and fro between.

"There! Father and Bessie are coming to hunt for us!" Edith cried. "I knew they would worry. Hail them as soon as possible, somebody."

But the launch had already been seen. A figure that they made out as the Major's came to the edge of the wharf.

"Hello! What boat is that?"

"We 're here, papa, and everything is all right," Edith made direct business of it, and answered.

"Good! You were late, and we had begun to worry a little."

They bore up to the wharf, and made quick work of disembarking. A little tumult of talk and explanations followed, broken by bringing forward the professor and his wife. It took ten minutes before the rescuers were sufficiently thanked and reluctantly permitted to go. It was on promise to renew the acquaintance. All this while, as Hamil noticed, Edith was so far Carmen that neither the Major nor Bess discovered anything.

Now they bunched together, and started up the path, the Major, with a lantern, in the fore. For a short distance they did not have to keep any particular order, but then the path narrowed, and only two could go abreast. Miss Winrose was near Bess, and came up with her, thus making up one pair. Edith was close behind them, and for the moment alone, and Hamil and Quesencourt brought up the rear. Both men had fallen silent, and were looking at the girl. Neither tried to overtake her, for Quesencourt of course knew

that she would probably think it a liberty, and Hamil shrank from bringing on the final disclosure. He knew that she would probably address him in a way that would attract the notice of Bess.

But Edith all at once settled the matter herself. She turned her head.

"Where are you, Jack? What is that strong arm for if not to help your wife along? You can talk with Mr. Quesencourt some other time."

Bess had said something to Miss Winrose, and at the moment was waiting for the answer. She could not well help hearing the terribly enlightening words. She stopped short.

Hamil pushed on, and took Edith's arm.

"All right. I was not intending to leave you to your own devices very long."

Bess must understand everything now, and so the worst was over.

But the poor child did not move, and the two came up, and had to stop.

"Clear the track," commanded Edith gayly.

Miss Winrose turned back, and took Bess by the arm.

"Come, dear. I will talk with you. It will be better to come along now."

Edith playfully gave her a little push. "Did n't you ever read Kipling's 'A Disturber of Traffic'? That 's what you are, so go on."

With head low, and without a word, Bess started.

"A great place to fall into a brown study, was n't it, dearie?" Edith said this with a new grip on Hamil's arm, and took a gay little skipping step.

"Why, yes, I—yes, I should say it was."

"Do your wits want to go wool-gathering, too? What ails you all? I seem to be the only bright one."

"I guess you are," he tried to laugh, and answered.

After all, there was something grimly like a mockery about it. For the instant he generously forgot his own gain.

But there were no more worrisome and awkward crises. Bess asked no questions,

and from there on to the house everything went about as it would have done had there been no transformation.

At the house Edith said that she must tell Bess something, and whisked after her and Miss Winrose. The Major had called one of the negroes, and gone somewhere with him. In this way the decks were for a moment cleared. Hamil felt the relief, and with something like a bit of cowardice slipped off to his room.

Supper had been put off, and when later he was summoned to it he found the Major silent and very grave, and Bess had evidently been crying. Edith had not as yet appeared. Baum and Miss Winrose were just sitting down, and were trying to look as if nothing had happened. Hamil, as he had often before done in like cases, at once threw himself into the breach. He spoke to Baum, asking a question, and started a little discursive talk.

Some ten minutes later Edith was still missing, and Hamil, in some surprise, boldly asked Bess about it. He used what saving

tact was possible, however, and spoke of her as "Carmen."

"Pardon me," she said. "She asked me to have her excused. I forgot to do it. She seemed all at once to feel the strain of what she had been through, and decided to go to bed. I have no doubt she will be all right to-morrow."

By "all right," Hamil understood her to mean physically. She could have no reason to suppose that there would so quickly be another mental change.

Hamil of course dropped the matter here, and the meal went through without further allusion to it. Towards the end the Major and Bess, rallying a little, contributed some commonplace talk, and did what they could to make the end better than the beginning.

The atmosphere was not favorable for intimate talk, and for the remainder of the evening there was a mere flitting about, and now and then, as they happened to meet, a passing word. Hamil spent nearly the whole of the time outdoors.

He came down to breakfast the next morning in a more settled and satisfactory state of mind. He supposed that the worst was over and that for a while things must go back to the old conditions. The dream was uppermost again, and the unreal was to be the real. It would be "Jack" and "Edith" once more, and the gods would bless him in the happy phantasy. On his part, he would steer a careful course, offending nobody if he could help it, and hiding his secret joy deep down in his heart.

But five minutes later he was thinking something very different. The grave look, assumed out of decency, ceased to be a sham, and became emphatically real. Bess had just brought down word that something was wrong with Edith; that she had awakened, and then fallen into a kind of stupor. Bess had tried to rouse her, but could not, and instead, had found that she was sinking into a state resembling catalepsy. Terribly alarmed, the girl had then rushed to the telephone and called up a doctor. They had a

line to Bar Harbor, and luckily their family doctor was there. He had already started, Bess said, coming in a swift motor boat. At the present moment the Major was in the sick-room, and would not be down for breakfast.

"And I must go back," she concluded. "Please go on without me. You shall hear at once of any change."

But for the moment all were too greatly surprised and shocked to move. Hamil felt his legs grow weak, and he put a steadying hand on the back of a chair.

Miss Winrose finally crossed over, and sympathetically got Bess by the hands.

"Why, Bess, that 's dreadful! And it 's so sudden! Did n't you have any warning?"

"Not the slightest. She was never taken so before."

"What did the doctor say when you told him?"

"He was surprised; but I judge he could n't tell just what to think."

"She is young and strong," Baum hopefully suggested, "and I do not understand that a

cataleptic state is necessarily dangerous. At least, I have heard of people who lay that way for days, and then came out all right."

"God grant that it may be so this time!" Bess brokenly said.

Quesencourt, like Hamil, had not hitherto spoken. Now, with some color lost, he said:

"Would to the Lord we could do something! Is n't there anything at all? Can't I take the launch, and go after another doctor? One may not be enough."

"Oh, thank you, but we have full confidence in Doctor Carlisle," Bess shook her head, and answered. "Besides, if he thinks there should be another he will bring him."

"Bessie," said Hamil suddenly, and the way he spoke made the others turn quickly that way, "I have my idea of this. I think it is a crisis. You know what has just happened. I don't believe that any brain can be the battleground of two personalities and endure it. Something must happen. In a Massachusetts case that I have been told about the girl finally kept her natural self,

and the other—in her case an impish and hateful personality—quit the field. Perhaps it will be so now. One self or the other may emerge from behind the curtain of this sleep, and forever keep the throne. I somehow feel that it is going to be so. Yet it may be a deadly fight, and we know that cataleptic sleeps sometimes end in death. God be merciful, and spare her! I am going out a little while, but I will be back by the time the doctor gets here. I don't want any breakfast."

He bit his lip, turned abruptly, and strode out.

CHAPTER XIX

HAMIL'S PROGNOSIS

HE left them all a little confused and surprised. The manner was not like his, for now it betrayed the personal note, and moreover had become bold and dominating. He seemed to have forgotten, or in the stress to have ignored, those scruples as to his social limitations that he had hitherto been tactfully mindful of. Even Baum and Miss Winrose, who of course were informed, were for the moment surprised along with the rest. They had not supposed that Hamil was ready to go so far in raising questions, and perhaps in placing himself ultimately at a disadvantage. As for Quesencourt, he did have a little indirect light, to be sure, but not enough for present understanding. The chief impression that he had naturally was that Hamil had grown bold, even

to assurance, but had a measure of excuse for it in his regard for the girl. In that little time on the rock the Englishman had in a measure discerned how matters stood, even though the idea itself—any hope that was behind it—seemed preposterous.

But Bess finally took up the broken thread. This was no time for trifles, or idle speculations. She was surprised and troubled, and if the concern of Hamil was to mean too much, she was ready to draw the sword against him, but just now there was neither time nor a certain call. She glanced after him, and as if wholly unsuspecting, sighingly answered:

"Poor Mr. Dana! He makes this almost his own trouble. But then, he was for a long time, as you might say, head nurse, and he learned to think a good deal of Carmen. But I must go back. I beg of you all to eat, and not to let this trouble, bad as it seems to be, spoil your enjoyment. If you want to be of use—I will put it that way, as I know you feel so—try to act as if nothing had happened.

You can entertain one another till we can do better. You go ahead, Marcella, and set the example."

Miss Winrose patted her hand.

"Yes, dear, since you feel so—Come, gentlemen."

Men of the ordinary temperament are generally ready for their meals, and though Quesencourt was grieved and worried, and Baum genuinely sympathetic, they did not hold off longer. In fact, in spite of their sober faces, they ate as much as usual.

Meanwhile, Hamil was walking up and down the path that led to the wharf. He could not content himself to keep still. After a while he crossed over to where a high, barren knoll gave the range of the westerly waters. From here he could see any craft coming from Bar Harbor. In making this change he had fallen under the observation of Miss Winrose, who happened just then to have strolled out on one of the upstairs piazzas. She watched him a moment, he unknowing, and her face clouded. With a

brushing sweep of her little hand she walked back into the house. "It 's no use. He wants her, and if she should die he would have a *wanderlust,* and never give me a chance. It 's all off."

Hamil made out the fast-driven power boat at last, and turned and swung at a fast gait down to the wharf. Before the launch was around the inner point the Major came down. He smiled forlornly as he saw Hamil.

"We still have our ups and downs, Dana, and lately it has been mostly downs. I feel pretty nigh broken up."

Hamil did his best to force a cheerful look.

"But there may be good luck just ahead. How is she now?"

"The same. She is rigid, like one who is dead. I don't know what it means."

"I understand she was never so before?"

"Never! She never had any kind of fit in the past."

"I have always understood that few except hysterical people were subject to catalepsy. She is n't of that temperament."

"I don't know what the rule is; she is n't hysterical."

"Then who knows but in her case it means something far-reaching, and that will bring about a great change—the breaking up of all that has been so strange and abnormal?"

"I never thought of it in that way." The old man brightened perceptibly. "But what warrant have you for thinking so?"

"No warrant; but the thing is certainly possible."

"Would to God it might be so! I would risk even her life to bring it about. As she has been lately I have n't felt that she was really living. She has been like Mahomet's coffin, between heaven and earth. Of course you have helped us all you could, but it has been trying and humiliating. For the last few days, since she has been herself again, I have had some new hopes, but you see how little foundation there was for them."

The launch was now turning in for the wharf. A man forward stood up and waved his cap.

The Major flourished his hand in answer.

"Is that Dr. Carlisle?" asked Hamil.

"Yes."

"Then we shall soon have something besides guesses to go on."

"I hope so. He knows more about her than anybody else, but at that he has never done more than guess. He has always said that her case was a compound of—what was the word—psychiatry, and physiology? Anyway, it 's serious enough."

The launch swept in, and as the power was shut off, and it rounded to at the wharf, a little wiry, black-bearded man jumped actively ashore. He reached back for his overcoat, and a "grip," and when they had been handed to him started almost at a run across the wharf. The Major met him, and they heartily shook hands.

Hamil now observed that the celebrated alienist and surgeon was past his youth, but as active as a cat, and that his black eyes gleamed with zeal and virile energy. His gray business suit and his little Scotch cap

gave him a boyish touch, and this went well with his light, swift movements.

"How does she seem now, Major? Still in the cataleptic sleep?"

"Yes."

"Quite bad, but it might be a good deal worse."

"I suppose that's true. We'll go along. But first, I want to introduce Mr. Dana. Dr. Carlisle, this is a New York gentleman that has been very good to us. I will explain later."

The two men shook hands. The doctor gave Hamil a swift running over with his flame-point eyes, and then turned them elsewhere. With the last word of the conventional civility he was ready for something else.

"Well, how is little chubby Bess?"

"She is all right, but of course upset in mind. With everything else, she was expecting a sort of beau today, but he could n't come; so she has kind of met with the rubbers."

"Good discipline for her. That 's what we say when it does n't come into our own dish."

But the Major was too full of his trouble to stay long away from it. He went back now by saying:

"Mr. Dana, here, in talking about Carmen, has just advanced a new idea. He has suggested that possibly this catalepsy may mean a general turn-around with her, and that she may come out of it to stay her natural self. I tell him God grant it."

"Of course I spoke only as a layman, and in the way of a guess," Hamil explained. "As she has never been subject to catalepsy I thought it was likely to mean something out of the common."

"I have known laymen to make astonishingly good guesses," the little man emphatically said. "You are pretty well acquainted with Miss McAllister, then?"

"I may say so. I have been a sort of nurse, if you may call it that, through the time of her last hallucination."

"He is the man I wrote you about," the

Major put in. "Carmen fancied she was married to him."

"Ah, now you are informing. Very good! Later, Mr. Dana, I may wish to ask you some questions."

"I shall be glad to answer them."

The doctor was thoughtful for a moment. Then he said:

"It is n't by any means impossible that your guess about her present condition may turn out correct. With such strange elements present almost anything may happen."

"Doctor," McAllister spoke up, and his voice trembled, "I am ready to take about any chance. I mean I would if it was in my power. I want her one thing or the other, and I tell you I shan't complain if she loses her real self, and always stays the bogus one. Either way she is all right, and though of course I should prefer to have the normal person, yet I would n't whimper if it was the other way. You have seen her that way, and you know how nice and agreeable she was. You joked at the time—I suppose to keep my

spirits up—that she was an improvement in disposition on the real Carmen."

"I know I did, and I was n't a great way from the truth. As the counterfeit she was charming. That of course is n't meaning any disparagement of the real girl. Well, then, Major, you may lose your double pearl, and have instead one big crown jewel. That means taking a little stock in Mr. Dana's prognosis."

Hamil smiled. Yet his eyes had quietly kindled. Say that Edith, as an entity and never to be dispossessed, came out of that battle-chamber? What might not he hope for then? Aye, who could gainsay him? Yet there was the other side. Suppose it should be a permanent Carmen? From the recent happenings he would even then have a little hope, and he was no longer trying to deceive himself by pretending that he should not prize such a hope. Carmen was not Edith, but fast she had followed after, and now and again he had seen the leader overtaken, and a sweet and almost bewildering

little incarnation follow. Yes, and if he won there would always be before his eyes Edith's outward self, which would ever be more precious than any other body of woman, and sometimes flashes of the Edith soul.

Yet one of these things meant great hope, with joy and completeness, if there were no mishaps; the other stood for a doubtful chance, and a lesser fulfillment. If there were anything, then, in what the doctor had called his prognosis, he was about to test his sturdiness and patience in a way they had never been tested before.

And last, as absurdities trip always upon the heels of sacred things, as it were, like gargoyles sprinkled along the facades of the temples, a whim darted through his mind. He relaxed, and mentally laughed. No harm, but he thought of Stockton's tale, and repeated: "'Now, which came out, the lady, or the tiger?'" He was back again to the higher level soon enough.

The doctor grew more silent as they came nearer the house, and when they were inside

he merely stopped to throw off his cap, and then silently followed McAllister to the sick room.

Hamil hung back, and at the last slipped away, and started again on one of his automaton walks.

CHAPTER XX

IN THE DEEP WOODS

IN fifteen minutes, which seemed to him like half an hour, he went back to the house. The doctor was in the office, talking with the Major. Bess was standing in the hall, and nobody else was in sight.

He halted, and Bess turned to him. In answer to his inquiring look:

"He can't tell much about it yet. It may be days before there is any change. He is going back, but we are to 'phone him every day, and he will hold himself at our call. He says that he sees nothing immediately dangerous in her condition. If she continues in her present state any length of time we shall have to resort to artificial nourishment, but he says that on that she would keep alive for weeks."

Hamil drew a long breath.

"Well, I suppose that's as encouraging as we can expect. I have read up a little on catalepsy," he went on, "for the subject interests me, and I find that cataleptics generally live through these trances. She certainly ought to, as young and strong as she is."

"Oh, it seems so, and I won't think it can be different, but at the same time, we know that hers is not one of the ordinary cases. I —I am going to be prepared for the worst."

Her lip quivered and she turned her head away.

"Try to be brave," he encouraged, and his own voice had a tremor in it. "We must n't despair till we have to."

She felt for her handkerchief and wiped her eyes. It was evident that she was near breaking down.

"We are depending on you," he quickly said, seeing how it stood with her. "You are now your father's mainstay. You must n't fail him."

She made a brave struggle and put away the handkerchief.

"I shan't. I know how it is; you are right."

The doctor was taking leave of McAllister, and facing about; Bess waited for him.

Outwardly, at least, he was cheerful. He stopped and slapped Bessie's shoulder lightly with his cap.

"We shall not allow any blues yet. No cause for them."

She tried to smile.

"I am going to be brave."

"Of course you are. In emergencies women ought to be braver than men. Nature has given them a reserve to draw upon. I shall be at the other end of the 'phone, and you know what to do. Mr. Dana, could I see you a moment?"

"Certainly."

"Good-by, girl."

"Good-by, Doctor."

Hamil went with him down the walk, and the physician at once lost his smile, and hardened for business.

"You 've had a difficult task, I find, and

have done it remarkably well. I didn't know so much about it before. McAllister feels that it hasn't been a matter of dollars and cents with you, and he can't be grateful enough. I guess that's all right. But as you've gone in like that you must have made the case a close study. What do you think?"

"Why," said Hamil, surprised, "I don't know that I have any positive opinion. I am hardly qualified to have one."

"Don't be too modest. I am only a human being, and I am seeking light. Contrary to the common opinion, a doctor can't clap on magical X-rays and see into everything. Give me some idea of the girl's looks and actions, as you have noticed them from day to day."

"I will do the best I can," Hamil returned after a moment's hesitation.

"That will be better than anybody else can do. You're not too old and practical, like the Major, nor too young and inexperienced, like Bess."

Thereupon Hamil, going along slowly, and

at times with pauses, gave the substance of all he knew. Of course he did not speak of his own feelings.

The doctor listened with silent attention.

"Good enough!"

He felt in his pocket, and got out a note-book and pencil. After he had made a brief entry he said:

"That helps. I *know* now I am in the deep woods. I supposed before that I was."

Hamil was a little surprised, as well as disappointed. Perhaps he showed this in his face, for the doctor, after a glance that way, resumed:

"It is always worth something to a discoverer to know that he does n't know. It saves taking wrong roads. From all that I have to work on now I believe that the case is, in some respects, *sui generis*. Therefore, we 've got simply to wait. When something determinative and tangible appears I 'll be ready for it."

"I see," Hamil rather wonderingly answered. He began to understand the man's

way, which was so simple, unpretending and straightforward as to be almost puzzling at first. It was rather uncommon.

"I understand from McAllister," the doctor then went on, "that you will, for the present, at least, remain with them. In the event that the girl pulls through, and that her late hallucination continues, they will of course need you."

"They could n't drive me away with a shotgun!" Hamil laughed. He broke a twig from a bush they were passing, and twisted it to a wisp. "As you say," he added a little hastily, "they need me."

The doctor did not seem to notice this slight departure from the manner of strict business. He did not answer in direct terms, as if such an answer were not required. In fact, after a little pause, he merely nodded.

Hamil here thought of something else, and with a slight show of vexation started in again:

"It is n't the money that makes me seem a little zealous. I see that I might be misun-

derstood about that, and though of course you don't care, I want to stand right. No, I am honestly interested in the case, and—and in the person herself."

The doctor wore a thick mustache, and a short beard. At this point the mustache lifted a little at the corners. He nodded.

"It occurred to me that you might feel that way."

"You mean," said Hamil, seeing the look, "that I could make that statement emphatic. Well, then, I do. I am tremendously interested in her."

"That's straightforward! All right, sir. And it was n't a hard guess that you felt that way, for the girl is certainly as alluring as a woman can be. The trouble is—and to be plain, it is extremely serious—I don't at present see how your interest is going to do you any good. If the girl gets over this she may still have a dual nature, and that implies a serious doubt of her sanity. In fact, there are confessed aberrations. Such ought to bar marriage, even if you could win her in

both personalities, which I should suppose would be unlikely. And then her father certainly would n't consent. He thinks a good deal of you, I know, and with him I don't believe lack of money would stand in the way, but the other things would. I have gone out of my way to say this, I know, but now and then I allow myself to be unprofessional."

Hamil had winced under the words, but now he lighted up gratefully.

"Don't apologize. In fact, I virtually drew out what you said. I am obliged to you, Doctor, and I am aware that what you say is true. I can't do anything unless there is a permanent change in her, and probably nothing unless what has been her abnormal self should become the normal one. I suppose that seems more than doubtful to you, but a layman can dream, and I have dreamed that. I wanted to dream it, for, Doctor, I care all the world for her, and that 's God's truth! I can't argue about her sanity, or insanity, for that does n't fit in with what I feel. I merely know that when she is what you call

abnormal she is sane to me, and the loveliest and most lovable woman on earth. I want to do right, and I am going to, but I can't quite give up hope. I think I should go crazy if I did. I know about the other difficulties, but I think I could meet them. But one other explanation I will make. I do it to clear myself of any lingering doubt as to my motives. I am not a poor man, Doctor, but a rich one. None of the family know it as yet, but later I shall of course tell them. It came about through my wish to save McAllister a little embarrassment. I thought he would feel freer to hire a poor man than to ask a favor of a rich one. My name in full is John Dana Hamil, and here is my card."

The doctor, as he took the card, did not take the trouble to look at him. He glanced at the card, and put it in his pocket-book.

"I seem to be taking as much of your time as your patient," said Hamil, then seeming to feel an apology necessary added, "You may believe that I did n't start to do it, but it sort of came itself."

"Don't say a word! It's the biggest romance I was ever mixed up with, and I would n't have missed it for the world! Doctors that are good for anything have to have imagination, for that precedes the work itself; yet imagination must have something to feed on, and what could be better than this? If you 'll forgive me, I 'll go further, and say that it approaches excitement."

"Oh, well," laughed Hamil, relieved, "if that is the way you can look at it, then all right."

"Yes, it's as I say. But as to your hopes, and the outcome— Well, you are right, and don't give up. My experience has taught me humility; and also as we believe, there 's a Power that sometimes takes these things into His own hands. . . . My boat is waiting for me, so I will say good-by."

He put out his hand, and Hamil, his eyes blinking suspiciously, heartily grasped it.

"Good-by, Doctor. I feel better for having talked with you."

"I wish I could be as pessimistic with my

patients and come out as well. It would be easier than lying."

He sprang aboard the boat and she swung off.

Hamil lingered a moment, but his look gradually sobered, and he turned, and went slowly back up the path.

CHAPTER XXI

IF NOT EDITH—?

BUT the watching and waiting had only just begun. The rest of the day nothing else happened, and a second day was also blank. The third day the doctor came again, and this time brought with him a trained nurse. He found no change in the patient's condition, and reported that there was still nothing to do but wait.

The fourth morning Hamil went out for an early walk, and refreshed himself by a plunge in the very cold water. On the way back, at the top of the rise, just beyond the little glade, he came upon the Major. The old gentleman was sitting on a log in a heavy and dejected way, smoking. His elbows were on his knees, and his cigar had been so indifferently attended to that it had almost gone out.

He saw Hamil coming and brightened. He sat up and gave his cigar a reviving puff.

Hamil put on as brave a front as he could and flourished his walking switch briskly.

"Good morning, Major. Taking an early airing, as well as myself? I 've had a plunge in the water, besides. Splendid weather."

"Fine. Did n't you find the water cold?"

"Yes. But for that reason bracing."

The Major took out his cigar, and in an absent way looked at it. Hamil approached and sat down beside him.

"How is she? Any change?"

"No; just the same."

"As I 've insisted from the start, she *must* pull through. Why should n't she? Is n't she all right as to strength and vitality? The doctor talked hopefully to me."

"That 's part of the trade. But he finally admitted, did n't he, that it was mainly guess-work?"

"Eh—well, in a way he did."

McAllister put his cigar back, and smoked for a moment in glum silence. Hamil, a

trifle disconcerted, shifted his place on the log, and switched some dust from his shoes.

With a sigh, McAllister dropped his cigar and ground out the spark with his heel.

"It 's a hard proposition, Dana. Of course I want her to get well, but I am almost as anxious for her to get back her right senses. It is no living, in the true sense of it, the way she has been. Strange what could ever have made her so! There 's no insanity in the family, and she had no sickness, or other trouble, to bring it on."

"But I don't call it insanity, or not wholly that," Hamil spoke almost doggedly. "There have been some aberrations, as the doctor calls them, but he does n't say that these cover everything. It seems that her case has many features like the ones reported in the medical journals. There is something besides insanity to explain. In my opinion there are real grounds for the theory of a dual nature. No hypothesis of any sort of brain disturbance can account for all that has happened; it is a mere expedient, for lack of any-

thing better, to classify such a condition under the head of insanity."

"Perhaps," the old man said wearily; "but practically it amounts to about the same thing. A part of the time she has been herself, and a part of the time she has n't."

"But if she has had virtually *two* selves," Hamil persisted, "it can't be just that way. Now to me Edith has been about as real as Carmen, and—to be plain about it—fully as charming and interesting."

"It is n't exactly news to me that you feel so," the old man said with a faint smile. "Bess noticed it, and called it to my attention. I told her I thought it was rather natural, under the circumstances. I knew that it made no difference in any direction, and so I did n't think much more about it. You behaved like a gentleman, which was all I asked."

"Well, sir," said Hamil with deliberation, but with an underlying note that was a little like defiance, "that is true enough, but even gentlemen are human. While your daugh-

ter was Edith I fell in love with her. That 's the straight, simple truth. I just could n't help it, and after the beginning, I did n't try. It was my first experience of the kind. I am going to be above-board about this, no matter what the consequences may be. If it should please God to give Edith permanently the individuality that has hitherto been divided with Carmen I shall ask your consent to marry her."

McAllister opened his eyes wide, and stared in the unflinching and resolute face. In fact, Hamil was so desperately in earnest, and had braced himself so sturdily for what it seemed must come, that his look was almost grim.

But the old man did not take very long to recover his bearings. He brought his lips together, turned his eyes elsewhere, and finally nodded.

"That 's something of a stunner, and I was n't looking for it. I did n't suppose you were falling in love with a crazy girl. No doubt it 's square to tell me now, but I should

be better satisfied if you had spoken out sooner. But let that go. We 'll talk business." He wheeled sufficiently to look Hamil directly in the face. "You ought to see that your idea is an impossible one—even preposterous. There 's no sense in saying that she may come back and be permanently 'Edith.' There 's no such person as 'Edith,' and never was. If she is permanently anything it will be herself. Even this New England girl that has been quoted so much finally came back as her original self. Then if my daughter should come out of this and start in where she left off, she would simply be crazy, and would have to be treated accordingly. What, then, is the use for you to talk about marrying her? In discussing this I have not said anything about money matters, or my lack of knowledge about your past history. I don't care about the money, but before you married into my family I should insist on having your record. In fact, I shall want it if you keep on as you are. I ought to have asked it before. Now there 's one more thing: are

you interested in the girl as she really is, and do you have reason to suppose that she cares about you? As far as she is concerned, I have n't seen any signs of it."

Hamil was merely grave now. Whatever there had been that was more assertive was gone.

"In a sense I care about her," he deliberately answered, "for it is impossible to regard her as wholly another person from Edith, and as I see more of her this feeling strengthens. But on her part, as Carmen, I don't think she cares for me. I mean that I don't feel that I should stand any particular show to win her. Still, of course I don't know. I will say one thing; I don't believe she has any sentiment for Mr. Quesencourt."

"But of that," said the Major sharply, for the moment ignoring the rest, "I don't see that you are qualified to judge?"

"I gave my opinion merely as such," said Hamil, unmoved.

McAllister still looked a little dark.

"But I suppose I ought to explain one

thing," Hamil seemed to have another thought, and resumed. "That is about my personal record. In a sense it is bound up in another matter which is that of my identity. Mr. McAllister, I have deceived you in one thing. I did it at the start to make the present arrangement easier for you. I am not John Dana, but John Dana Hamil, and I am the son of Louis R. Hamil, formerly of Newark. So that I am cleared of any lurking doubt as to my being possibly some impecunious adventurer. Here is my card, with my New York address; I have letters, and other proofs, in my grip, and of course you can easily investigate for yourself."

He handed the card over.

The Major, with another change of expression, took it. He glanced at it, and turned it over in his fingers, evidently trying to get the idea into his head. Then he looked back at Hamil, ran his whole face over scrutinizingly, and with a laugh put out his hand.

"Of course you are the son of Lou Hamil. Now that I know what to look for I can pin

it down. Well, but you have given me some lively surprises today."

Hamil was already smiling. They shook hands, and the Major, not content with that, patted him on the back.

"But you made one mistake, John."

"What was that?"

"Your playing this little game on me. Of course you meant right, and your motive was very nice and delicate, but you did n't need to do it. Your father and I were better friends than I see you realize, and I should have accepted an offer of help from his son without hesitation."

"Then I am sorry I did n't come straight out. But you see, my father died a number of years ago, and I did n't know very much about his personal life, nor his friendships."

"I understand. It 's all right. But now, John—I am going to call you that, instead of being formal—"

"Excuse me. Make it Jack. That will be less formal still, and will sound much more natural."

"All right, 'Jack,' then. But what was I going to say? Oh, this puts the matter you were just speaking of in a somewhat different light. I really can't see how I can have any other opinion about the situation, but of course I look in a different way at you. There is no family in the United States that I regard higher than the Hamils, and your father's memory, next to my wife's, is about the tenderest one that I cherish. It would be entirely agreeable to me, then, to have you for a son-in-law, and if you can think of any possible way to bring it about, why, go ahead."

"Thank you a thousand times, Major! That clears away some dark clouds. But as for the rest—as to any plan— Oh, well, of course we can't at this moment make any. My fate must eventually be in the girl's hands, however it shall please God to return her to us. I shall do my best to have patience."

In spite of him, the strained look showed again in his face. He glanced at his watch.

"It is nearly breakfast time. I suppose we had better be going. I am not hungry, for my part, but you can't run a stomach without food."

"That 's so. Well, we will go back."

They started, but there was no need of haste, and the Major had some questions to ask. Before he was through he understood all of what he termed Hamil's little plot.

"Huh!" he grunted at the close. "So Baum and Miss Winrose know? I am a kind of tail-ender in the business. Never mind, if there is anything more doing I shall certainly be in on it. How surprised Bess will be! I can tell her, of course?"

"Certainly."

"And the doctor, if you don't mind? As the whole thing is pretty closely under his eye, and as your interest in the case might puzzle him—"

"Pardon me. He already knows. I will tell you how it came about."

By the time he was through they had reached the house.

CHAPTER XXII

THE SILENT COMBAT

AT breakfast they learned that Baum had received a business letter that called him home.

"Even a non-commercial man can't always get rid of such things," he sighed.

Rather strangely, too, Miss Winrose was also called home. She was blue about it too, it seemed; or, at least, she was grave about something. In fact, they both went that same afternoon.

Quesencourt, however, was of entirely different intentions, for he made it plain that his present anxiety, no matter what came up, would hold him where he was.

Late that afternoon the doctor came again. He found the patient this time a bit restless, and as this might indicate some change he decided to remain for the night.

Bess appeared just after supper, having been driven out by the doctor, who had ordered her to take a brisk walk. She was just starting when she met Hamil.

"How is she now, Bess?" he asked anxiously.

"Still somewhat restless, and her temperature is rising. It has been low all along. The doctor and the nurse are watching every sign. I wanted to stay, but Dr. Carlisle said that I was fagged, and drove me out. I am going for a short walk, but I shan't be gone long."

"I will stay here and wait for news."

"I wish I might. But oh, I have n't said anything, have I, about the other news? When papa told me I was dumfounded. But I am awfully glad, Mr. Hamil, that you *are* Mr. Hamil. Papa knows all about you, and your family, so that hereafter you can't be in the least like a stranger."

She offered him her hand, which he took, and for an instant held. "Bessie, tell me one thing. You know how I feel towards your

sister. Do you think I have any show? While she was herself, this last time, did she speak of me? What did she say? I don't want you to break any confidences, but if there is anything you can properly say I beg of you to say it. You can guess how I feel."

"Why, Mr. Hamil," she said sympathetically, "I should be glad to give you any good news if I could. The fact is, though, I don't know how she feels. When she is her natural self she never talks to me about such matters. Yes, and the truth is she won't let me quiz her. She is very reserved. But I will say this much: I know she likes you, and thinks more of you than she did at first."

"Thank you for that."

She went on her way, and he fell back on his old trick of pacing up and down the walk.

No important news came down that night. The patient continued to a certain extent restless, but not sufficiently so to indicate that she was about to break the trance. Hamil managed to get some breakfast, and after that wandered into the office. Nobody else was

there. Suddenly there was a whisking step in the hall, and Bess darted in. She was pale and her eyes were shining.

Hamil felt a weakness in the legs, but he managed to stand outwardly firm.

"Oh, Mr. Hamil! She's awake!" exclaimed the girl in breathless excitement.

"Thank God!"

"And she is n't so dreadfully weak. The doctor is wonderfully encouraged."

"Excellent! Splendid!"

"Is n't it? In a few days more, if she continues to do so well, she can come down here again."

Hamil felt the need of a drink of water. As he faced Bess again, the full light happened to strike on his face. At sight of it she uttered a cry.

"Why, Mr. Hamil! how haggard you look! At this moment you actually look worse than she does! You must rest."

"Thank you, but I am afraid I can't just now. Yes, I am a bit fagged."

"Sit down. We can talk that way."

"Oh, I am not so far gone as that."

But he dropped into the chair that she thrust toward him. When she had taken another she said:

"Papa felt so happy that he cried, and of course I did too. That's what makes my eyes and nose so red. Yes, and Mrs. Gurney sniffled, and Mr. Quesencourt—"

"Mr. Quesencourt?"

"Yes, I met him as I came down the stairs."

"Excuse me. Go on."

"He slapped the post of the banister as if he would break it."

Hamil sat back in his chair, and put his hand to his chin. He had sobered again, in spite of the news.

"Bess, I must ask a question. I simply *must*. Is she herself, or—or is she the—the other?"

He bent forward. His eyes were shining, and there was a hectic spot in each cheek.

Bessie, at first lighting up joyfully, sobered, and her look strayed from his. She hesitated.

"I can guess," he whispered.

"She"—the girl faltered—"is herself."

He drew a long breath. His color fled, leaving the former dull pallor.

"Why, Bessie," he said, and he looked at her unwaveringly and faintly smiled, "of course we thank God for that."

She sighed with relief. At least, he was putting down whatever disappointment he felt.

"Oh, indeed, we do thank God. And the best of it is—" She hesitated.

"The best of it is what?"

"That the doctor thinks she may stay so. You see, this time she did n't lose herself very long. And even while she was so she knew things in a different way from what she had before. You noticed and spoke of it. She recalled people whom, in her former spells, she had utterly forgotten."

"Yes, that is so."

The tears suddenly came into the girl's eyes.

"You are a brave man, Mr. Hamil, and I shall always thoroughly respect you. I un-

derstand your disappointment. You thought, like some of the rest of us, that this might prove the last change, and if it turned out so, that she should be permanently Edith, then at least nobody but you could have her. But after all, that could n't have come out in any satisfactory way. Papa says that she could n't have contracted a legal marriage, and that, as she thought she was already your wife, it would have been hard even to induce her to go through the ceremony. Yes, Mr. Hamil, that was a dream. You must see it so now."

"Why, Bess," he said gently, and with a look that she always afterwards remembered, "you don't quite understand. Allowing that her condition would not have permitted a legal marriage, then I should have been content to stay simply the nurse. She would have needed me, and I should have been glad to be needed. You did n't think of that, did you? Well, it seems to be all over, now."

She faltered before the strange, half-smiling look with which he said this. His mean-

ing, too, with the surprise that it brought, confused, and almost confounded her.

"Oh, Mr. Hamil!" she murmured at last, "that is wonderful! It is like the ancient tales of chivalry, that I thought never could be true. And I wish—yes, I do—that Carmen could learn to love you. While she is n't Edith, yet in a sense she is, and it seems as if after a while it would be all one to you. I suppose I am saying too much, but I do pity you. Oh, I wish I could give you some real encouragement, but as everything stands I can't. I don't care about Mr. Quesencourt, though he is all right, but he is no such man as you."

"Thank you, Bess, for such kind words, and such a championship," he said gratefully. "I can see that my chance now is small, but it is not my way to give up till the last hope is gone, and so for a while I shall stay. Yes, for it will not do to let Mr. Quesencourt outlast me, even though his chance now does seem better than mine."

He threw back his head, and with the dis-

He came down to breakfast the r
ing in a more settled and satisfacto
mind. He supposed that the wors
and that for a while things must g
the old conditions. The dream w
most again, and the unreal was to b
It would be "Jack" and "Edith" on
and the gods would bless him in t
phantasy. On his part, he would ste
ful course, offending nobody if he c
it, and hiding his secret joy deep do
heart.

But five minutes later he wa
something very different. The g
assumed out of decency, ceased to
and became emphatically real.
just brought down word that some
wrong with Edith; that she had
and then fallen into a kind of stu
had tried to rouse her, but could
instead, had found that she wa
into a state resembling catalepsy.
alarmed, the girl had then rushed
phone and called up a doctor.

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rgent. He knows who you
now, and he won't refuse."
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. I'll slip up to my room, ar

I help you?"
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his room.
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minutes to put together the few
ant to take. When he had at last
took his small suit-case and star
the room. As he was about to op
a knock sounded upon it.
opened it. To his surprise, B

appointment now buried out of her sight, he smiled heroically.

Steps came along the hall, and the nurse looked in.

"Oh, Miss McAllister, if you don't take that walk the doctor will scold."

"I know it, and I must go. Good-by for the present, Mr. Hamil. I wish you every bit of luck in that matter that is possible."

"Thank you, Miss Bessie."

This was all they cared to say before the nurse, and Bessie went out to begin her walk. Hamil sat in the chair for half an hour. He almost dozed once, but shot wide awake again. Finally he started up. He rang a bell by the desk, and Henry soon came in.

"I have decided to go for a few days to Bar Harbor. I am not feeling very well, and I think that perhaps the change will do me good. What I want to do is to slip away quietly, and not disturb anybody. Do you suppose that I could have the use of the launch, to carry me?"

"Certainly, Mr. Hamil. Candley, that

runs the launch, will take you. Just tell him that it is urgent. He knows who you are, as we all do now, and he won't refuse."

"Thank you. Your information is worth this dollar. I 'll slip up to my room, and get ready."

"Can't I help you?"

"No, thank you; or not unless it is to give the old man the word to have the launch ready."

"I 'll do it. I hope you are coming back soon, sir."

"Oh, yes. I am merely running over to see whether I can't break up a little nervous touch."

Henry started on the errand, and Hamil went to his room.

He felt weak, now, and it took him fully twenty minutes to put together the few things he meant to take. When he had at last done it, he took his small suit-case and started to leave the room. As he was about to open the door a knock sounded upon it.

He opened it. To his surprise, Bess was

there. She looked flustered, and in some sort of perplexity.

"Oh, Mr. Hamil, you are not going away just now?"

"Oh, only for a few days, to Bar Harbor. I thought I could get rid of my little spell of nerves there. No, I am going to do as I told you, and cling to the last plank of the ship."

"Oh, I am so glad! Lucy overheard you talking with Henry, and tell him that you were going away. She came upstairs, where I was with Carmen, and sputtered it out. She is the greatest darky for news that ever was. Well, and Carmen spoke up, and said you must n't go. She began to get excited, and the doctor sent me to see you. I will tell her that it is all right, and that you are only going for a few days. You know she is weak, and it does n't take much to stir her up."

"Tell her—tell her at once. And give her my congratulations on her recovery."

"I will. Good-by for a little while, then."

She cordially gave him her hand, and he

shook it with something like his old unthinking strength.

"Good-by, my best friend at court."

But he had hardly followed her a step into the hall when the doctor came along the passage.

"Good morning, Mr. Hamil. I came to say that you are wanted. Miss McAllister wishes to speak with you."

Hamil was shocked from his impassivity.

"To speak with me! With me?" he repeated.

He stared blankly from the doctor to Bess, as if he did not understand.

"Did she send for him?" Bess asked wonderingly. "Oh! she is n't wrong in her head, is she?"

The laugh that met this slip broke the tension.

"Not at all," Dr. Carlisle assured her. "No. She fretted after you went, and finally broke out that she wanted to see Mr. Dana. I tried to get her out of the notion, for I thought it would be best to keep her for the

present entirely quiet; but she would n't have it that way. She began to get excited, and as that would n't answer, I gave in. I told her that she could see him just a few minutes."

Hamil's pale cheeks had begun to glow. He put down the suit-case.

"All right. I will see her the few minutes."

"She does n't know yet that you are Hamil," the doctor stopped to say, "so we will speak of you and to you as 'Dana.' Come, Bessie, you and I are not in this secret, but I suppose we can go along."

"It *is* a mystery, just the same!" the girl declared.

Hamil said nothing. He and Bess followed the doctor along the passage, and the doctor paused at the sick-room door. "Now, quietly, everybody!" he enjoined under his breath.

The door was slightly ajar. He pushed it open, and led the way in.

CHAPTER XXIII

VICTORY!

THE room was not darkened, but the shades on the sunshiny eastern side were partly drawn. Hamil's first glance darted towards the bed; but she was not there. She was sitting in an easy-chair, her head bolstered, and a hassock under her feet. She wore a blue dressing-gown, and her great wealth of shimmering hair was smoothed back; it hung across one shoulder in a braid, the end of which rested upon her lap. Bess had told him that she was but little changed in looks, and he found this true even beyond what he could have supposed. She looked merely a trifle wan. Perhaps from the excitement her cheeks were faintly flushed. However, to him, the vision was the most beautiful in all the world.

He stood lumpishly for a moment, and for

once in his life, at least, looked clumsy and awkward.

"Mr. Dana!"

She was smiling, and as he at last pulled himself together and approached her, she put out her hand.

"Well, Miss McAllister," mustering a hearty tone, he said, "it is fine to see you picking up like this!"

He took the extended hand as if it were made of glass and might break. Nevertheless, the hand was fairly warm, while his own was cold.

She looked up searchingly and anxiously into his face.

"Why, Mr. Dana, what 's the matter? You look fairly haggard, and your hand is cold! I believe you look sicker than I do."

"Oh, that is n't saying very much," he laughed lightly. "It is pretty near an exaggeration to say you look sick at all."

"But you *do* look sick. Bessie, you did n't tell me that Mr. Dana was n't well," she re-

proached her sister with a note of regret and criticism.

"He did n't complain, and I thought I would n't for him," Bess evaded. "Besides, he was going away for a brief recruiting spell. He would have been started by this time if you had n't stopped him."

"I had reasons for wishing to see him." She looked at the doctor. "I am all right, and I want to have a few words privately with Mr. Dana."

There was determination in her look, and the doctor, scarcely hesitating, nodded. He was too well-bred to show surprise at the request itself. Bessie, however, looked a shade wild and was slower in starting. The nurse, seeing that the request was to be granted, had already slipped out.

They were in the hall at last, and the door had been drawn to its former position.

"Please shut the door tight," Carmen requested Hamil. "They won't listen; but I want to be able to speak freely."

Unable to keep the surprise wholly out of his looks, he obeyed and came back.

"I see that you are puzzled," she began, "and no wonder. Have a very small amount of patience, and you shall understand. Will you please bring that chair this way?"

He took the chair pointed out, and brought it to where he had been standing.

"That is n't quite close enough. A little nearer. That will do."

He had brought it quite close to her.

"Now sit down."

He started. Something in her way, or in the tone, had a tingling suggestion. He took the chair.

"Jack, in the first place, tell me—are n't you looking like this on my account? Have n't you been worrying?"

He straightened back in the chair so suddenly that he almost upset it. What did she mean by using his name like that? And the voice itself, in some subtle shading of the tones, was again a different voice, one that sounded natural with his name.

She smiled in his staring face.

"You are fond of Shakespeare. 'Where gottest thou that goose look?' But you have n't answered my question."

He set his lips, leaned forward, and looked deliberately in her face.

"You are not Edith—Oh, God, no! They did n't deceive me about that. You are not looking at me with Edith's eyes, and your mouth—but then why did you speak to me as you did? Why did you call me 'Jack'? And something in your tone reminded me of her. Don't play with me! Don't keep it up! Tell me just what you mean. You can't be Edith—can you?"

But a light danced into her eyes that made him gasp. He had never seen that light in Carmen's eyes. He sprang up.

"But you are, you *are* Edith! Either that or I am going stark mad! Be quick! Tell me! Now your look is different again! You are the other, or has—something turned my brain?"

But as he almost staggered backward she

gripped the arms of her chair, and slowly rose.

"I am good for this much. Now I am nearer. Jack, look just once more. Tell me what you see. I am not trying to torture you. I merely want to know something for myself. I have been hiding it from the others. Jack, I want you to tell me who I am."

Slowly, and yet not so, considering the stress and overwhelming wonderment of it all, he took her wrists, and looked again in her face. She flashed the light into her eyes.

"Now what am I?"

"You are Edith! God bless you, yes!"

"And now?"

She looked at him with calm intentness.

His enthusiasm died, and he seemed almost afraid.

"Now you are the other."

"Once more—which one?"

Her lips curved faintly in a smile.

"Still the other."

"But if I let the smile go free, and curb in my chin a bit, like this?"

"Edith again! Bless the merciful God that suffers this miracle!"

She tottered, but by an effort, sank slowly back into her chair.

"I am not so very strong, after all. Wait a moment." She leaned her head back, and closed her eyes.

He stood motionless, his breath coming long, his eyes hollow yet bright with joy beginning to dawn in them.

A small clock on the mantel made itself heard. After a few seconds she opened her eyes.

"Now, Jack, listen. I don't fully understand it, though what you have done has helped me. But what I am sure of is that I am not just as I was. Edith seems to be gone, and yet I feel that she is not. I am at this moment Carmen McAllister, and I know perfectly what I am saying, but nevertheless, I am sure that I am not exactly the same that Carmen McAllister was. I possess something—something beautiful, and good—that the old Carmen never had."

He looked at her with returning, almost bewildering perplexity.

"You see, Jack, Edith has left behind some things that were hers. Among others is a different feeling for you from what Carmen McAllister had. To be sure, Carmen was beginning to—well, no matter. The feeling that I mean is—it is only right and just that you should know—but of course you *do* know. So now—"

But he was on his knees, her hands in his, and his lips going down tremblingly to them.

"Dear old Jack!" she said under her breath. Her eyes grew misty, and she gently withdrew one hand, and placed it on his head.

The little clock asserted itself again. Then he slowly rose, and stood looking down on her.

"I want to make this seem real, but I can't unless I see you."

"Not even when you kiss my hands?"

"They might be some other hands."

"What! Would you kiss another girl's hands?"

"Impossible! Yours are the first I ever kissed, and they are going to be the last."

"If only you meant that!"

"You know I do. Yes, God bless you! Yours are the first hands, and Edith's were the first lips."

"You mean, since you were a grown man?"

"Yes."

"How wonderful!"

"But true."

"And this great, mighty Jack Dana has saved all of himself for me? Oh, and Jack, you *must* answer my question. What makes you look so badly? Was it really worrying about me?"

"Not wholly. Part of it was worrying about myself."

"Oh!"

"Because I feared I had lost you."

"Was that it? How lovely! I mean, I am sorry, but the idea is lovely."

"Darling," he broke out, unable to sustain himself longer, "this is so much like heaven that it does n't seem as if I could stand it! I

don't believe I can unless I have Edith back for just one instant. *She* used to kiss me, and let me kiss her."

He bent over her. "I will be very gentle, and you can keep quiet, and not exert yourself at all."

But she interposed her hand.

"I am not Edith, I am Carmen."

"Carmen, then. Please don't be—"

"But we are not engaged. Please remember that, Mr. Dana."

"Then for heaven's sake let us be! Only my name is n't Dana. Won't you be engaged to Jack Dana Hamil?"

"What? Won't I be engaged to who—I mean whom?"

"Jack Dana Hamil. Gad! now I think of it, you have n't got a monopoly of doubles. Why, for that matter, I have a triple. You know you tacked on 'Beauchamp.'"

"Jack, what *do* you mean? Tell me, now, or you never shall kiss me!"

"I shan't? I 'd kill a man and eat him before I 'd stand that prohibition! Well, then

—but say—will you let me kiss you after I tell?"

"I don't know. It depends. Oh, Jack, tell me truly, are you fooling?"

"No. Are you? Will you marry me?"

He bent lower, and now a shade of real concern came into his face.

"I am in desperate earnest, Carmen, and you know that. You don't mean to play lightly now, do you? You would n't fool me?"

She sobered too, and for one instant was silent. Then she said, bending her head a little lower:

"No, Jack, I never thought of fooling you. Only you know a girl does n't want to surrender too easily. But I love you, and I will marry you, whatever your name is."

She raised her face. He leaned down, and his lips descended upon hers.

They were in no hurry to separate, either; in fact, they lingered till a knock came at the door. As Hamil raised his head, Dr. Carlisle called out:

"You must cut your business short; we can't afford to take chances."

"All right," Hamil answered, frowning. "We want just a minute more."

"Among other things," she laughed, but looked at him curiously, "I should like to be *sure* of the name of the man I am engaged to. Is it honestly and truly Hamil?"

"It is."

"Why, are you one of the Newark Hamils? One was father's particular friend."

"That was *my* father."

"Gracious! And how in the world did it happen that you gave that other name? What did you do it for?"

"I thought it would make it easier to get the place. I will explain more fully about it later, but I will say now that from the first I longed after it."

"To look after a crazy girl?"

"Please don't say that! I never thought it."

"Oh, well, then, we will call her your pearl."

"That is decidedly better."

"But you've lost her now. The double pearl itself has gone."

"Oh, no, dear."

"Then what?"

"The two have become one—one priceless pearl."

THE END

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